Navigating The Heteronormative Public Education System:

Lesbian and Gay Educators' Experiences in Educational Leadership

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved April 2014 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2014

ABSTRACT

The experiences of lesbian and gay (LG) administrators in school and district-level positions are different than their heterosexual counterparts, not just because their social lenses are different, but because the policies and climates of the communities where they work has a significant impact on their relationships with stakeholder groups in the schools/offices. In this qualitative study I document and analyze the stories of LG educators, how they navigate their professional relationships, how they evolve as leaders, and their understanding of how their choices to be out or not have influenced their careers and professional relationships. The study also explores how performativity and sexuality relate to the professional relationships of the participants. Finally, the leaders' stories provide insight into the experiences of marginalized groups of professionals whose stories are often absent from the professional and research literatures on school administration.

These eight school and district administrators live in the Southwestern and Northwest, many of them are out at work and a few are not. They range in age from mid-20s to late 50s, and their experiences as educational leaders spans from just one year to over 25 years. The participants sat for two to three interviews each over the course of approximately four months. The names of the participants, institutions, and specific communities have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

I found that all the participants' relationships with stakeholders groups and individuals were impacted to varying degrees by fear – specifically the fear that results from the heteronormative rules, biases, and expectations of the public school system. The heteronormativity of the public education system is often a reflection of its community's

belief system, as well as a reflection of the larger, more unconscious heteronormative belief system that shapes schools and educational leadership, a leader's professional capacity, and the relationships that are critical to being an effective leader. Essentially, the heteronormative fear reflected in the policies and practices of a community, an educational institution, and its members has a dramatic effect on the decisions and relationships that educational leaders have with key stakeholder groups on both an unconscious and conscious level.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful, generous, loving and patient friends and family. I am so very blessed to have you in my life.

To my parents, you have always believed in me, even when I didn't. Your time, patience, and countless hours of listening kept me going. I wouldn't be the woman I am, the professional I am, or the parent I am without you. I love you.

To my friends, it is journeys like these that remind me of how lucky I am to have life-long friends that believe in me and motivate me when I need it. April, Maria, Megan, and Liza – I would not have made it without you. You are some of the most amazing women I've ever known, and you all inspire me every day.

To Connor, my son, all that I am is because I want to be the best for you, because you deserve the best. Being your mom has given me the courage to find my self, push my boundaries, and work to live an authentic life driven by passion. My only wish is that you will always live that way, too.

Finally, to my wife Nichelle, you teach me so much about life, love and priorities every day. You have sacrificed so much to support my dreams. Thank you for never giving up on me and for not allowing me to give up. Thank you for challenging me, listening to me, picking up all my slack, and growing with me. You are the seat of my soul.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of my dissertation and doctorate program would not have been possible without the guidance and wisdom of my committee: Dr. Jeanne Powers, Dr. Gustavo Fischman, and Dr. David Lee Carlson.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my co-chairs, Dr. Powers and Dr. Fischman. Thank you for believing that teachers never say no; your dedication, guidance, and honest feedback throughout my research inspired me to always ask more of myself. Dr. Powers, thank you for the countless hours spent on giving me revision notes; your experience, clarity and respectful compassion were often the safety net that kept me from drowning. Dr. Fischman, from the first time I sat in your classroom you pushed me to expect and give more of myself than I knew I had, because you knew I had it to give. I would also like to thank Dr. Carlson for his expertise and guerilla-passion – you inspire me to speak loudly and politically.

I would like to thank all members of my cohort in the DELTA program; I learned so much from all of you, and I am honored to share this most noble of professions with you. May we once again dance in Spain and Costa Rica.

Finally, I want to thank my participants. You shared more than just precious time with me; you shared intimate parts of your lives with me. Your courage and leadership will always be a beacon on my darker days; you have helped me to be a better leader and to work harder for the things that really matter. I will carry your stories and all that I learned from you for the rest of my life.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

I fell in love with the stories of women, their lives, and their struggles, when I was fourteen. The characters in Zora Neale Hurston's, Toni Morrison's, and Alice Walker's novels-- Janie, Sethe, Beloved, Celie, Shug, Tashi, and so many more-- spoke to me about experiences that were completely foreign to a white, middle class suburban teenager, but they enraptured me with their voice, depth, and power. Though I knew the characters were fictional, these women and their stories were representative of real communities and issues; they were real women to me. The first time I ever put down a book and wept came at the end of marathon reading session that began at sunset and ended at sunrise; I was exhausted and invigorated to have met someone who changed my view of the world. These stories taught me how to see through the eyes of another and about the beauty and connection found only in stories. Story, and the power it has to change lives, inspired me to become a literature teacher. I wanted to bring that experience to others so they could have a taste of what authors like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison had done for me. This understanding of the transformative power of story became the foundational approach to my dissertation topic.

I preface my formal introduction with this personal story because it is important to contextualize how connected I feel to stories and why this study hinges on them. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) write that "narrative inquiry is stories lived and told" (p. 20), which is a simple idea, but powerful in its impact. Narrative fiction connected me to people and lives I would not have known otherwise; narrative fiction inspired my career's passion and has connected me to the lives this study has revealed.

I conducted a research study that examines the professional histories and experiences of school administrators who are lesbian or gay, specifically the experiences they faced throughout their career paths to becoming and being administrators. I also explored how these leaders navigate the myriad of relationships in their respective leadership roles and how they perform their identities throughout their career paths, their leadership positions, and in the different political climates of their schools and communities.

I describe the literature that has explored the dynamics associated with being an LG (lesbian or gay) educator in America, including the pertinent legal history and policy that has shaped the experiences of LG educators. Some researchers have used narrative to tell the stories of LG educators, and their many teachers have been given a voice through these studies. There is important documentation about instances of abuse and discrimination that LG educators have lived, including recent events around the country.

While the discussion of LG issues in education has often focused on students, and their stories are very important, there are many LG voices missing from the stories about schools in America: the stories of our lesbian and gay school leaders remain largely untold. Knowing their experiences and voices is critical to hearing the whole story.

The Story of My Topic

When I began working on my EdD in Educational Leadership and Supervision four years ago, I was a high school literature teacher, married to a woman, but mostly closeted about my personal life. There were rumors amongst the student body speculating about my personal life, and students often "came out" to me because they knew my classroom was a safe place for them. I had a few close friends at school that knew I was

lesbian, but I chose to remain closeted because Arizona, where I currently live, does not protect employment rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people. I also worked in a school district within a conservative community.

Four years ago my wife, a small-business owner, began having health issues and did not have insurance. I was not allowed add her to my health insurance policy, and our bills for her care increased. Understanding that it would "out" me to the administration, but feeling desperate for avenues of support, we sought legal advice about suing to have benefits extended to same-sex partners. I approached some of my LG colleagues for support, but they were all too afraid of the potential professional fallout to join my fight. Our lawyer drafted a letter to the district administration, but the benefits were once again denied. Because there was little legal precedent in the state that suggested we would win our case, it ended there, as did my chances for becoming an administrator in that district. I taught in that district for a few more years and then eventually left for an administrative job in a neighboring district. I never felt safe enough to "come out," but always wanted to.

My personal decision to stay closeted at work was the initial motivation for my dissertation topic. I longed for connection with educators in similar situations. I wondered: What is it like to be "out" at school? How do some educators navigate the conflict between their personal lives and the culture that threatens LG teachers? Can LG school leaders be "out" and be effective leaders in conservative communities? I wanted to hear stories from people who may have answers to these questions or who have shared similar experiences.

The literature is rich with stories of teachers who are out at school and how being out has impacted their relationships with students, their curricula, and even their approaches to education as a whole. I was intrigued by what I read about the experiences of teachers who came out to their students and co-workers. Many of them report having positive experiences and have no regrets about coming out (Jackson, 2007; Harbeck, 1992; Jennings, 2005). But the more I read, the more I was frustrated that the voices of the leaders who supported these courageous teachers were rarely documented. Many teachers told stories about how their principals were honored that these teachers trusted them enough to share such personal information; many also described how their principals supported how they came out to the staff and their students. Some principals even used teachers' decisions to come out as an avenue for a dialogue with the staff about diversity and sensitivity (Jackson, 2007). The stories untold are those of LG administrators and other leaders. I have heard their stories.

For my research, I decided to seek out the stories and voices of LG educational leaders at the school and district level. I followed a narrative inquiry protocol to document their stories and to tell my own, now that I too am an administrator and am "out" in my current school.

Problem Statement and Rationale

School administrators that are lesbian or gay are often hesitant to openly identify as LG[1]. The threat of losing a job, career, or even worse often prevents LG leaders from

[1] I use the LG (lesbian or gay) abbreviation to be encompassing and clear about whom I am discussing throughout the study. With respect to students, I use the abbreviation LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender); this term is more encompassing of their experiences and generation. I have left out the T and B (transgender, bisexual) when discussing educational leaders because these terms did not describe the participants I was able to find for this study.

coming out. Moreover, the heteronormative cultural biases of educational institutions may prevent leaders from implementing policies and engaging in activities that will help make our schools safer and more productive for everyone, and LGBT students in particular.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of LG administrators in school and district-level positions. The study focused on documenting their stories as LG educators, how they navigated their professional relationships within the heteronormative context of public schools, evolved as leaders, and how they understand their choices to be "out" or not have influenced their careers and professional relationships. I also explored how performativity and sexuality relates to the professional relationships of the participants. Finally, the leaders' stories provide insight into the experiences of marginalized groups of professionals whose stories are often absent from the professional and research literatures on school administration.

Research Question

How do LG administrators perform in their relationships and roles as educational leaders?

a) How do the policies and politics of a community influence the relationships and performances of LG administrators?
b) How do sexuality, professional roles and legal rights of protection influence the relationships and experiences of LG educational leaders?

Purpose of the Study

LG educators and administrators work in our schools, but we know very little about how they negotiate workplace environments organized around heterosexual norms, heteronormative biases, and how, if at all, they address and support LG issues, students, and organizations in the schools that they work in and lead.

The purpose of this study is to explore and reveal the experiences and performances of LG educational leaders and how their sexuality has impacted their professional lives, paths to/in leadership, professional relationships, and how they viewed and practiced school leadership.

Definitions and Key Terms

Leadership: For the purposes of this study and the conceptual framework, leadership refers to the title and place of influence in the organizational hierarchy within a school or district administration a leader is employed. For example, the framework will examine if a person's position was at a school or district level of influence and hierarchy. If the participant is a district-level administrator, it will examine at what level of the organizational hierarchy that person is or has been. The level of leadership will often change depending on the stage of a person's career, which intersects with other aspects of her/his experience. Furthermore, leadership, and where a leader exists in the organizational hierarchy is important with respect to the influence of policy and practice she/he holds, as well as the employment vulnerability of the leader's position. For example, a district superintendent is at the top of the organizational hierarchy and holds significant influence over the policies and practices in a district, while an assistant principal is lower in the hierarchy, holds less influence, and thus, is more vulnerable to the policies and practices of the leadership above.

Heteronormative: This is cultural biases and practices that assume that heterosexuality is the norm and preferable to homosexuality, including heterosexual gender roles and heterosexual relationships (Warner, 1991). This term and its application in various contexts will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Heteronormative assimilation: I define this term as a loss of the subaltern cultural behaviors and identification of LG educators as they are subjected to heteronormative school policies, practices, and climates. Lugg (2003) describes the "assimilationist imperative" as a mandate that requires LG administrators to conform to enforced heterosexual norms that mask any hint of homosexuality. Essentially, it is LG administrators who assimilate, mask, or hide behaviors and other cultural identifiers in favor of dominant, heterosexual cultural behaviors and norms. Yoshino (2001) argues that assimilation for lesbians and gays can take three different forms: conversion, passing, and covering. My research did not find cases of conversion, so I only discuss passing and covering.

Passing: Passing is when a lesbian or gay man presents herself/himself to the world as straight, but her/his underlying identity is not altered. At home, she/he lives and operates as gay or lesbian, but to the public or at work, she/he presents a heterosexual identity or lifestyle.

Covering: Covering is when an internal identity is neither altered nor hidden, but the lesbian or gay man presents in a way to allow others to disattend to her/his sexuality (Yoshino, 2001). For example, lesbian women may dress and present themselves in a heterosexual way; i.e., she looks the part of a heterosexual woman by wearing feminine dresses and makeup. The opposite is true for gay men. Additionally, LG people who

cover may refrain from public displays of affection and resist being part of gay activist activities (Yoshino, 2001).

Professional Significance of the Study

Schools must be places of learning and safety for all students, teachers, and administrators. Documenting the experiences that LG leaders have helps us better understand how we can help our schools reach that ideal. As Capper (1999) observed "[q]ueer research in administration can open another window on power and oppression in schools and further expose how heterosexism constrains everyone" (p. 5). We can gain important insights about what it is like to be an LG leader through their stories. As Clandinin and Connelly (2004) discuss in "Why Narrative*,"* we think in metaphors, we learn through stories, and we make connections to other human beings by listening to their voices. Ultimately, the significance of this study is that it will help all teachers and administrators learn and make connections with uncharted situations and people: LG educational leaders.

Summary

This chapter has explored some aspects of my personal journey that brought me to the topic of LG administrators and their experiences in navigating the relationships tied to education leadership. I have reviewed some of the reasons that stories and using a narrative inquiry approach appeal to me as a researcher and for the aspects of this topic, though a more complete discussion of narrative inquiry and its theory will be discussed in Chapter 3. Some of the key terms relating to the topic were outlined and others will be introduced in their respective sections in later chapters. A discussion of the related

literature and concepts will help clarify what research already exists relating to LG educators, as well as the frameworks I used to guide my inquiry and analysis.

Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

I was in my sixth year teaching when my assistant principal made a gay joke, and I forced myself to laugh. In that laughter I betrayed my relationship, my dignity, my beliefs, and my inner voice. I was scared. We were sitting in his office talking about school issues. He and I had worked together for the better part of a year, and we had a mutual respect; after all, he was a former English teacher. The topic of another teacher, Cade[2], came up and we discussed what a good teacher he was, that the students really liked him and responded to him. And then my assistant principal said, "Yeah, but he's just so damn gay!" Just like that…it hung there, and I didn't know what to say. So I laughed. I quickly made another statement about what I had learned from Cade; I deflected the topic, but I did not confront how he made me feel or how wrong that statement was. He insulted my colleague, but he also insulted me. I thought: What would he have said if he knew I was just so "damn gay?" How could I ever be an administrator if any of "them" ever knew I was gay? So I laughed.

My story is not unusual. The fear of being "outed" if I didn't react appropriately was stifling. I betrayed my sense of truth and who I am out of fear of losing a job and the potential of not getting another job. I feared how my supervisor might react to me and treat me. I wondered if I could be fired. I was isolated and ashamed, which is exactly how many LG educators have felt in many similar situations.

This chapter will outline some of the history of LG educators, including how they have been treated in their schools and communities and how their fears have affected

[2] To protect the confidentiality of my participants and those related to the researcher, I use pseudonyms for all personal names, organizational names, and specific geographic locations.

their professional lives. I will also review the legal policies that governs employment rights for LG educators, review the research that has examined some of the experiences of LG teachers and their reasons for choosing to hide their sexuality by conforming to heteronormative behaviors at school. Finally, I will discuss performativity, intersectionality, and queer theory to frame my analytical approach.

LG Educators: Policy, Workplace Environment, and History

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual teachers and administrators working in United States (U.S.) schools have long experienced hate, discrimination, and acts of violence and abuse (Bliss & Harris, 1998). One need only look at a newspaper or watch the national news to see current examples of teachers and administrators being fired for being gay or suspected of being gay. Teachers and administrators around the country are terminated or threatened for their sexual orientation every year (Velasco, 2012; Holland, 2012; Retelle, 2011).

Because LG[3] educators have historically experienced discrimination and hostility in the workplace, many have been, and continue to be, forced to live their lives unauthentically (Blount, 2000, 2003). As discussed earlier, Yoshino (2001) characterizes two forms of this as passing and covering, and explains,

> Passing means the underlying identity is not altered, but hidden. Passing occurs when a lesbian presents herself to the world as straight. Covering means the underlying identity is neither altered nor hidden, but is downplayed. Covering occurs when a lesbian both is, and says she is, a lesbian, but otherwise makes it easy for others to disattend her orientation. (p. 772)

LG educators have often employed passing and covering techniques in response to the

[3] I choose to use LG as a focus not because bisexual and transgender administrators do not exist, but because I did not find any literature specifically addressing their experiences in the education field.

heteronormative biases that threatened their professional and personal lives. As Blount (2003) documents, the history of "hunting" LG educators is long and is often based on the assumption that homosexuality is an abomination and a threat to children. Parents, business leaders, new media, and even elected government officials have led small and large-scale attacks to find and "run out" gay educators. For example, Blount cites a newspaper story published in Boise in 1950 in which the reporter argued that homosexual teachers would "endanger the youth of America" that resulted in several educators leaving town in the middle of the night for fear of merely being accused of being gay (2003). These educators feared that the repercussions of being gay or being accused of being gay would mean public humiliation, harassment, and even physical threats. Leaving their homes, friends, and financial livelihood was less frightening than the fallout of a witch hunt (Blount, 2003).

At times, government officials have actively targeted LG administrators because of their sexual orientation. For example, in the early 1960s the Florida legislature created the Florida's "Johns Committee" and charged members with the task of uncovering the extent to which lesbians and gays had "infiltrated" the education system; the committee was asked to make recommendations to remedy the situation (Blount, 2003; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). The Johns Committee's recommendations for dealing with gay, or allegedly gay, educators included psychiatric treatment, arrest, and prosecution, and the creation of a registry that was to be made available to government officials and agencies (Blount, 2003). In the 1980s, teachers in California who showed inklings of cross-gender

characteristics[4] found their jobs threatened; the mere accusation of being gay or acting gay was enough to legally terminate a teacher or administrator (Blount, 2003). Blount argues that these examples suggest that LG educators were, and continue to be, held to a "moral code" that requires them to conform to heterosexual behavioral and cultural norms if they want to keep their jobs and avoid public scrutiny.

LG Educators and the Law

These stories provide a few examples of how government agencies have supported people and movements that "hunt down" and expose gay educators in an effort to keep them out of schools and away from children. These actions were, and continue to be, facilitated by laws and policies that allow this to happen. An examination of civil rights and employment protection laws shows few specific protections for LG teachers and administrators, even today (Eckes & McCarthy, 2008). Many states, like Arizona, Utah, and Texas do not have provisions in their state laws that protect the employment rights of LG educators because they are considered private employees, making it legal for an employer to fire an employee simply because of his/her sexual preference (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2012).

The result of this government-sanctioned discrimination is an entrenched heteronormativity in the work place, and public schools are no exception. The fear of losing one's job, career, friends, and professional credibility is powerful and scary enough that many teachers and administrators will stay closeted, building lives and

[4] Examples of cross-gender characteristics for the time include women who dressed more masculine (pants, suits, button-down shirts), men whose physical mannerisms may be more feminine or whose voices were higher in pitch, women who wore shorter hair styles, or even men who taught courses traditionally left to women, like home economics or dance.

identities based on lies and a fear. Many LG teachers work to pass as straight; they adopt behaviors and physical characteristics that conform to gender stereotypes and lie via omission when directly asked about their private lives and relationships (Jackson, 2007; Jennings, 2005; Harbeck, 1992).

Woods and Harbeck (1992) studied twelve female physical education teachers who all believed they would "lose their jobs if their lesbianism were revealed;" (p. 141) many of these women worked to pass as heterosexual by omitting personal information when asked, changing pronouns when talking about their personal relationships. Pat Griffin's study of 13 gay and lesbian educators (1992) described how all the "participants believed that a public accusation would inevitably result in one of two equally negative consequences: loss of job or loss of credibility among students, colleagues, and parents" (p. 171). Griffin found that all the participants utilized some forms of passing or covering related to their sexuality as a result of their fears.

Janna Jackson's study of nine gay and lesbian teachers found that some teachers purposely acted in ways to pass as heterosexuals; one teacher even kept her hair long to "omit her gayness" (2007, p. 64). Jackson goes on to describe other ways teachers hid their sexuality; one participant describes that "trying to 'disguise the fact that you're gay…has some pretty negative effects'" (p. 64). Her participants talked about feeling disconnected from coworkers and frightened about what could happen if they were outed (Jackson, 2007). These choices resulted in external consequences reflected in their relationships, but Yoshino (2001) also suggests that such acts also shape internal identities.

Kevin Jennings' (2005) book *One Teacher in 10* documents the stories of lesbian

and gay educators through their own words. Teacher, Patricia Nicolari, talks about how she "was exhausted by the energy it took to hide" her sexual orientation and lived in fear of being "found out" (Jennings, 2005, p. 16-17). Kathleen Crawford describes how she was outed to her administration and resigned amid fear of scandal and hearing many "hateful things" from her supervisor (Jennings, 2005, p. 36-37). Stories like these are many and evidence that hiding their homosexuality is a difficult, but an often safer choice for many LG teachers.

Policy Review: LG Educators and the Law

The federal employment policy was amended under President Clinton and currently states:

> It is the policy of the government of the United States to provide equal opportunity in federal employment for all persons to prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, age or sexual orientation through a continuing affirmative program in each executive department and agency. This policy of equal employment opportunity applies to and must be an integral part of every aspect of personnel policy and practice in the employment, development, advancement and treatment of civilian employees of the federal government, to the extent permitted by law. (Executive Order 11,478, 1969; Executive Order 13,078, 1998)

This Executive Order only protects federal employees. As state employees, teachers are not protected by this rule, and individual states are allowed their own employment policies and non-discrimination categories. Currently, the Arizona Department of Education Non-Discrimination Policy is as follows:

> It is the policy of The Arizona Department of Education to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or any other characteristic protected by law. The Arizona Department of Education prohibits any such discrimination or harassment. (State of Arizona, Department of Education, 2013, p. 1)

Arizona state employees are protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation (Hunt, 2012), but because educators are classified as employees in their individual school districts, many LG educators in Arizona can be terminated without protection. Furthermore, the employment policy is only that, a policy, and can be rescinded by the governor, just as an Executive Order can be rescinded by the next President of the United States. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is not written into the law in Arizona and many other states, and those who experience discrimination are not allowed "the right of private action" (Hunt, 2012). Fortunately for educators in Oregon, Washington, and New Mexico, they are protected, as all three states specifically recognize sexual orientation as a protected status in their non-discrimination laws for all employees (Hunt, 2012). Table 1 summarizes the varied policies and laws in the states related to the participants in this study.

State	Law or Policy	Sexual Orientation	Employees	Recourse
Arizona	Policy (2003)	Yes	State only	No action resulting in damages allowed. Offender can face disciplinary action only.
New Mexico	Law (2003)	Yes	All employees	Can seek action and be awarded damages.
Oregon	Law (2007)	Yes	All employees	Can seek action and damages. Punitive and compensatory damages available only in civil court
Washington	Law (2006)	Yes	All employees	Can seek action but can only recover attorney fees. Employers can be forced to take remunerative action and pay damages in some cases.

Table 1. Summary of study-related state sexual orientation laws (Hunt, 2012).

Research and discussion about LG rights, including the rights of educators and educational leaders, almost always includes a discussion of policy related to the protection of LG people, as policy reflects our cultural values and shapes organizational climates (Lugg, 2003, 2006; Tooms & Lugg, 2008; Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Koschoreck, 2003; Blount, 2003; Mertus, 2007).

Recent initiatives from the White House that seek to add gay rights to the U.S. Human Rights foreign policy, to officially change the treatment of LG government employees and how they are treated in the hospital, and to add a sexual orientation program to the FBI (Valelly, 2012), suggest a change in perceptions and attitudes that may eventually lead to more protective legislation to be proposed and implemented in all states. However, Mertus (2007) argues that LG rights activists are more often adopting a path that argues for sexual rights, rather than gay and lesbian rights. This emphasis might complicate the organizational acceptance of LG administrators and teachers because communities, especially in states that are slow to change and more politically conservative, like Arizona, are often resistant to addressing issues related to sexuality in education policies. Biegel (2010) writes that educators "are still confronted with a combination of subtle pressure and express admonition that together limit their ability to be open about who they are … [as] reflected in job placement and promotion decisions that favor educators whose sexual orientations and gender identities appear to conform to mainstream norms" (p. 49).

Because the limited literature on LG administrators and teachers suggests that they often assimilate and stay in the closet as protection from discriminatory practices in the workplace, this study examined how they work to negotiate the workplace and the

relationships in their workplace. It also examined how employment and non-discrimination policies may shape educators' choices about being out and the results of those choices. How do educational leaders develop as leaders, develop their leadership, and develop relationships with those whom they lead in territory that is often dangerous, safe, or unstable?

Issues Facing LG Educators

Leadership and the Environment for Success

Leaders, by the vary nature of their positions, do not work in isolation. The relationships she/he has within the organization rely on the leaders' ability to foster and support key elements that will sustain the growth and motivation necessary for an organization to thrive. This is true for educational leaders. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) explain that the key to making leadership effective lies in the leader's ability to "handle themselves and their relationships" (p. 6). Many studies focusing on the conditions and elements of successful leadership of an organization list predictability and trust as two necessary elements of effective leadership (Heifetz, 1994; Goleman et al., 2002; Grogran and Shakeshaft, 2010).

Predictability for a leader and the organization is key to building stability and the buy-in from key stakeholders necessary for progress. Heifetz (1994) writes that, "For social living to succeed, we all need to believe that our social structures and relationships will perform predictably in keeping with the norms to which we ourselves subscribe" (p. 107). Furthermore, predictability is key to building trust, and trust is important for maintaining norms and the structural stability of a group or community (Heifetz, 1994). Predictability helps develop trust and contributes to an overall cooperative environment,

one that is necessary for schools and organizations to flourish. Good (2000) found that,

> in conditions where the long-term interests of the participants are stressed, where only small initial or additional rewards are at stake, where there is no potential for threat and great potential for successful communication in that the ambiguity of the situation is reduced, and where the participants are in free and easy contact, then cooperation and, one might suggest, a certain level of trust can develop. (p.5)

But, why is trust so important? While it may seem obvious, trust is part of security, and leaders need to be secure to innovate and take risks in order to effect change.

Studies demonstrate that leaders and leadership are positively impacted by positive groups, including mentor relationship groups (Goleman et al., 2002). Positive professional groups foster trust and support a leader's focus on fostering change and building environments of change and innovation. Therefore, just like all leaders, trust for LG leaders is partially embedded in their feelings of job security and safety. The degree to which LG leaders have open, honest relationships with their superiors such that they do not fear losing their jobs for being gay is significant. Fear, as the literature suggests, has an impact on the decisions and effectiveness of a leader.

The Relationship Between Fear and Leadership

Leadership is stressful; leaders are under a microscope, which has an effect on their decision-making capacities. Stress often leads to feelings of fear (Goleman et al., 2002). LG leaders who live and work in an environment where they must conform to heterosexual norms and hide their sexuality tend to be under more stress and have more fear about keeping their jobs than straight people who take heterosexual norms for granted. Fear may be a significant factor in LG leaders' lives and relationships as leaders because it influences much of what they do and say, consciously or unconsciously. Our best educators are motivated by their love and passion for developing the capacity for

learning and changing the lives of others. Educational leaders work to develop this capacity within the many social and professional groups with whom they work: teachers, students, parents, the community, and the learning organization. So, how do fear and motivation work together to influence LG educators? According to Jim Collins (2008),

> … the dark side of motivation by fear is that it is like a powerful stimulant: it can jolt you for a while, but it also inevitably leaves you more drained than before. Wanting to survive-to merely avoid losing what we have-is not a goal that can motivate over the long haul. It offers no promise of forward motion, of accomplishment". (p. 9)

Fear then can deplete a leader and at times bleed him/her of positive forward motion. LG leaders may feel afraid to choose a particular course of action that will place them in a vulnerable position, one that is more open to scrutiny. For example, it is logical for a lesbian principal employed in a conservative school district that lacks an anti-discrimination policy against gay employees may be more reluctant to support the formation of a gay student alliance club for fear that any community reaction could also shine a light on her own life and sexuality. However, it is not fear alone that motivates her reluctance, it is the heteronormative biases that govern the organization that promote her fear.

Organizations that lack a safety net for LG leaders support a system of fear that further embeds and promotes heteronormative biases and policies that inevitably influences LG leaders and their decisions. Systems that offer a safe place for LG leaders help them develop relationships and make decisions that are more effective, efficient, and progressive.

> Positive relationships are more powerful than fear for achieving consistently high performance. That is particularly true in settings that require high levels of coordination across boundaries. Effective coordination requires people to step

> outside the safety of their occupational communities or functional silos to communicate with those who have very different expertise and knowledge. (Maccoby, Hoffer Gittell, & Ledeen, 2004, P. 16)

Educational leaders work with different communities and groups of people and this coordination is crucial to the success of a school and school system. Safety for LG leaders that includes employment protection and cultural acceptance is one factor that allows the development of more positive, genuine relationships. In this respect, Renzl (2008) found that the development of a trusting relationship between management and workers improves the way people in an organization interact with each other, the sharing of knowledge throughout the organization, and the motivation of people in an organization to contribute to the organization and its success.

The Workplace Climate for LG Educational Leaders

Most of the literature that discusses LG educational leaders focuses on the history of educational and legal policies that govern the lives of all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Schools are reflective of their communities' values and practices, so it is logical that examinations of local, state, and federal legislation frame much of the discussions. This chapter has highlighted some of the major components of such legislation, but here I will discuss the practices that go beyond legal policy.

Catherine Lugg (2003) argues that LG educators who want to become administrators must abandon a "core portion of their identity," because administrators are the enforcers of school and district policies that are both heteronormative and discriminatory. Yoshino (2001) talks about this in terms of assimilation and argues,

> This vision of assimilation is profoundly seductive and is, at some level, not just American but human. Surrendering our individuality is what permits us to enter communities larger than the narrow stations of our individual lives. Especially

> when the traits that divide us are, like race, morally arbitrary, this surrender seems like something to be prized. Indeed, assimilation is not only often beneficial, but also sometimes necessary. To speak a language, to wear clothes, to have manners-all are acts of assimilation. (p. 771)

So, in assimilating by either passing or covering, LG leaders may often be doing what is necessary to protect their jobs, families, and livelihoods. Yoshino (2001) and Lugg (2003) both discuss how LG people navigate their public and private relationships in many different ways and in different stages, all in reaction to heteronormative restrictions. Throughout the history of public education in the United States, leadership positions have been primarily awarded to white heterosexual males who are likely to reinforce the heteronormative cultural norms of a community and its schools (Lugg, 2003, 2006; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). On rare occasions where heterosexual women, homosexual men, or even homosexual women occupy administrative positions, they are often forced to assimilate, or pass, like teachers, and to adopt heteronormative behaviors (Lugg, 2003; Koschoreck, 2003; Blount, 2003, Jackson, 2007). Fraynd and Capper (2003) found that LG administrators edited their behaviors and relationships because of the threat of being exposed. Likewise, Griffin (1992) found that educators go to enormous lengths to hide their sexuality, which can ultimately causes psychological turmoil, guides professional and personal relationships, and leads to feelings of isolation.

According to Fraynd and Capper (2003), "no empirical research has been published that focuses specifically on gay/lesbian school leaders" (p. 87). However, deLeon and Brunner (2012) conducted a qualitative study that explored the lived experiences of gay and lesbian education leaders as affected by the actions and attitudes of a community (social and professional). They found that as the leaders in their study

became more empowered and more visible as LG leaders, there was an increase in intolerance and hostility. The deLeon and Brunner (2012) study focused primarily on the cycles of fear and how the participants' fear lead to different personal and professional losses and gains. They concluded that fear can be empowering for leaders as they become more impassioned about being role models for other LG educators, and it also found that the more fear about job security one had, the more she/he became silent and conformed to the heteronormative expectations of the community. Similarly, at this writing, one dissertation (Jones-Redmond, 2007) examined self-identified lesbian/gay administrators in Northern Illinois and found that not being able to be open and honest about their lives and identities negatively impacted the administrators' abilities to perform their job duties. deLeon and Brunner (2012) found that administrators who were not "out" felt less like they were living authentic lives. The study interviewed only school administrators and did not include district-level administrators or consider the other facets of identity, experience, and social/professional roles this study examines.

Conceptual Framework

To understand the experiences of LG school administrators, we must examine more than just their experiences in the workplace on a surface level. The interactions of several social and political constructs converge to shape the many situations and relationships that school leaders must navigate. While sexual orientation has an important influence on LG school leaders' performance of identity, it certainly is not the only factor that influences a leader's decisions and relationships with her/his colleagues and leadership style.

To develop this understanding, I use a conceptual framework that allows examination of the myriad of elements that affect a leader's life and career. This framework suggests a number of elements important to understanding the performativity, relationships, experiences, and decisions of an LG administrator. I also use the current legislative and social constructs to outline the context for LG administrators. As of this writing, there was very little research on the experiences of LG school administrators, but there is empirical research on LG teachers and how their sexuality affects their work environments, their professional relationships, and their approaches to their classrooms, depending on if they are out or not. This study can help district administrators and school leaders build organizational climates that support LG administrators and students. Additionally, like the much of the research examining the experiences of LG teachers, this study tells the untold stories of an important and influential group of educators: LG administrators.

The development of intersectionality in the late 1980s was a conceptual approach proposed by feminists of color who sought to expose and explore the complexities of their experiences that traditional feminist theory had ignored. Elizabeth Cole (2009) explains that,

> Feminist and critical race theories offer the concept of intersectionality to describe analytic approaches that simultaneously consider the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage. To understand how these categories depend on one another for meaning and are jointly associated with outcomes, reconceptualization of the meaning and significance of the categories is necessary. (p. 170)

Early theorists of intersectionality like Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), used the concept to expose the intricacies of race, gender, socioeconomic status, age, and other factors that

contribute to the identities and experiences of marginalized people, including how privilege and marginalization work together in complex ways. In sum, intersectionality seeks to examine "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). It seeks to study marginalized people and voices that previous, more exclusionary, frameworks ignored (Nash, 2008; McCall, 2005).

Understanding the complexities of identity and experience require a framework that looks beyond unidimensional understanding of the factors that shape individuals' identities, like race or gender. McCall (2005) argues that there are three primary approaches to intersectional analyses: anticategorical complexity, intercategorical complexity, and intracategorical complexity; I have used the intercategorical complex approach to frame my study.

Researchers using the intercategorical complex approach to intersectionality use a single concept or group to ground their analysis, in this case sexuality, and then move outward to examine the other influences, like race, gender, education, etc. (McCall, 2005). Intercategorical complexity is a way of exploring the boundaries of social categories and is aimed at drawing distinctions between categories. It recognizes the importance and relevancy of social categories to human experiences and looks at how people's experiences are shaped by multiple and unique configurations of categories. For example, the primary social category for my study is sexual orientation, but I move outward to examine how the effects of being LG are different with respect to gender, level of leadership, political climate (including legal employment protection), and the degree to which the participants employ passing and covering techniques. More

specifically, I examine the performance choices of the participants as they navigate their different relationships, roles, and situational experiences.

Traditionally, categories are social groupings, and social groups require some aspect for membership; however, they are generally not voluntary and cannot be changed. Gender, for example, requires that a person identify as male or female, and while a person's sex can medically be changed, the identification of a person as male of female is generally not voluntary. Level of leadership is a role and not considered a social group because membership is voluntary and can be changed; it requires that a person have a particular job title and serve in a leadership role. While intersectionality addresses social categories, I extend this framework to include roles, as well. The other categories and roles I use follow the same guideline. Schools and districts are a social and professional contexts in that employment is required for "membership;" however, each level, whether a school or district office, has its own social group category because they require different elements for membership. They also often have their own norms and expectations for behavior. These roles are important to examine because navigating membership in each group may be different for a LG educators than for heterosexual educators. As previously discussed, LG educators have had to hide their sexual orientation to various degrees at school.

In his book, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (2007), Kenji Yoshino names two critical phases of hiding his sexuality as "passing" and "covering" (p. 16-19). He describes these phases as not just an act of hiding on the part of the gay person, but as a "set of demands society" makes for gays to minimize their sexuality (p. 19). Passing describes a person's actions to hide her/his homosexual attributes, feelings,

actions, etc. A person who is passing does not share her/his sexuality with anyone other than close friends or relatives. Covering describes a more "out" lifestyle, but very controlled in that one does not share personal information at work or with strangers. Someone "covering" adopts heteronormative behaviors and characteristics in their public life at work, but lives a homosexual private life.

Warner (1991), is a central social category, much like early feminist theorists argued that gender is a central social category. About life as a queer[5], Warner (1991) explains, "Queers do a kind of practical social reflection just in finding ways of being queer. (Alternatively many people invest the better parts of their lives to avoid such a self-understanding and the social reflection it would imply)" (p. 6). Sexuality (lesbian and gay) as the central social category for the intersectional framework, anchors my analysis of how many of the other professional roles and contexts intersect and shape the leadership of LG administrators.

While intersectionality began as an extension of feminist critical theory, its application to marginalized people makes it an appropriate framework for this study of LG administrators. Intersectionality respects the complexity of experiences and relationships because it highlights how multiple categories of identity shape the experience of marginalized groups. As a result, intersectionality is the best framework for this study.

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5 Though "queer" as a term refers to a several categories of sexual identities, like pansexual, bisexual, and heterosexual, for the purposes of this study and conceptual framework, I will use it in reference to gay, lesbian, and bisexual peoples. This is not meant to be a limitation of the term and its intention of giving an association to marginalized groups, but to allow for some limitations on the sexual categories discussed in the study.

Performativity, as developed by Judith Butler, and explained in Chambers (2010) theorizes that identity is a product of one's repeated actions as they are situated in the context of social and political constructs. We cannot "perform" roles that are outside our realm of experience, and our identity evolves over time and through a series of acts. In considering this in the context of passing or covering, the act of that repetition of a role may serve to develop the identity of the administrator. If one "covers" her/his gay relationships and sexual orientation, how does this influence the performance as a leader and in relation to others? If a leader is open in her/his performance of LG identification, what is the result? Additionally, gender is subject to performativity and requires an examination in consideration of its relationship to sexuality.

Summary and Study Implications

Hearing the Stories of LG Educational Leaders

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature and research on the experiences of LG teachers, which is rich and pays homage to the importance of examining their role in schools and the lives of students. Many researchers have explored how the experiences of LG teachers in the classroom differ from their heterosexual counterparts and described the political and legal consequences of being an LG educator. The social and career fallout that may result from a teacher being out at school is often a central factor in her/his decision to come out or not. Furthermore, only a few studies addressed the climate of the workplace and the local employment protection and its influence on a teacher's decision to come out.

I have also outlined the elements of intersectionality and performativity that will serve as an analytical framework, allowing for a broader examination of the experiences

of LG administrative leaders. This framework is appropriate given its roots in feminist and critical race theories and its goal to document the experiences of a marginalized group of people.

Implications for Current Study

A gap exists in research that explores the experiences of LG educational administrators and how being LG has impacted their professional relationships; this study is a valuable contribution to the research on educational administration and the LG experience. While several studies have examined the experiences of LG teachers, very few have done this for school/district leaders, and it is leaders who are the key players in shaping the climate and culture of an organization. This study may also provide insights for (a) LG leaders faced with identity performance decisions in a school/district, (b) educators working to create a school climate of safety and acceptance for everyone on a campus, and (c) policymakers who advocate for policies that protect LG educators, especially in states where current policies or laws do not protect them from discrimination.

The next chapter will propose a structure for a narrative inquiry of school and district level administrators in the Southwestern and Northwestern United States. I will explain how the study has drawn on data aimed at giving voice to their experiences, histories, and significant professional relationships.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Procedures

I sat down with Maria for the first time on a Saturday morning. Maria greeted me at the front door of the Westfield Unified Schools district office and led me to her private office on the west side of the building. I was excited to see her work-home. Offices can tell you a lot about people. Plus, I was intrigued that she felt comfortable answering questions related to her sexuality at work; but then again, it was Saturday morning and she assured me that we would have privacy and would not be interrupted.

We sat facing each other but in an informal position; we talked for over an hour and a half. I planned for an hour, but I could tell that she felt comfortable enough after the first few questions that I could elicit deeper, more emotional responses to my questions. Maria was very honest with me and shared a lot of details about her career path and how she was treated in her first years as an assistant principal, especially by the men with whom she worked.

I left that first interview with Maria feeling compelled to write about what I learned from her; I was inspired to comb through the details of her stories that related to my personal story and the stories I still had yet to hear. It was the power of story that had led me to my topic and the way I decided to share it with the world, a new way of connecting to the human experience and the experiences of LG educational leaders.

This study is a narrative inquiry that tells the stories of gay and lesbian public school administrators. It explores their experiences as LG educators as they taught in the classroom, transitioned to administration, and developed as administrative leaders. It details their coming out stories, where applicable, and examines how their choices to be out or not have impacted their own professional lives as leaders, including their paths to

leadership. It examines the experiences of LG administrators through interviews and represents their experiences in authentic terms, by using their own words and mine. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) explain that "[e]xperience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively" (p. 19). The experience of living, finding oneself and one's identity is narrative.

In this chapter, I outline the development of the narrative inquiry and the narrative structure used to present my findings. I argue why a narrative inquiry is the most appropriate means of hearing and sharing the voices and stories of my participants, as well as clarify my role as the researcher throughout the study and in presenting my analysis. As Seidman (2006) says, "At the very heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experiences through language" (p. 8). The interviews with each participant capture the language and the humanity of their experiences.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research allows for the researcher to collaborate with her/his participants to present life stories and experiences (Creswell, 2009). Life experiences are not made up of a series of numbers that can be charted, and charts cannot communicate the emotion, depth, or range of what it is to be human. As Savin-Badin and Van Niekerk (2007) explain, "In practice, narrative inquiry is used to study educational experience since it is argued by those in this sphere that humans are storytelling organisms who lead storied lives" (p. 461). Our lives are stories, influenced by stories, lived as stories, and can best be understood as told through story. According to Xu and Connelly (2010), narrative inquiry is "the *experiential study of experience*" (p. 354). The experiences that

LG administrators have lived are best heard and told through narrative inquiry. Other researchers have used narrative inquiry to study the experiences of LGBT educators (Jennings, 2005; Jackson, 2007; Bliss & Harris, 1998), but none have focused specifically on administrators and how being LG has shaped their leadership.

Moreover, the narrative method allows researchers to do more than hear the stories of the research participants; it allows us to tell those stories as well. It is important to tell stories about people who are marginalized or subjugated as a means of challenging the dominant culture and the beliefs of the dominant culture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Conle, 2001). The voices and experiences of a marginalized group, like LG administrators, have been ignored or rarely recorded. Narrative inquiry helps document the experiences of the group (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and places the subjects, LG administrators, as the main focus of the research and experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

The narrative inquiry method was appropriate for this study because documenting and analyzing the experiences of LG administrators and their colleagues will allow others to better understand how their experiences compare to other school leaders. This is not to say they do not have anything in common with their administrative colleagues who are straight, but their lenses are certainly different to the extent they have had to or have chosen to cover or protect aspects of their personal lives. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) explain that "[s]tories lived and told educate the self and others…" (p. xxvi). In telling their stories, LG administrators live, relive, and reaffirm their paths toward and in administration and reflect on how being lesbian or gay has shaped them as leaders. Furthermore, the presentation of their stories is both anecdotal and analytical. The inquiry mode leads me through the interviews and how I interacted with the stories of my

participants. The analysis of their stories and experiences structures the presentation of the data.

It is important to acknowledge the reservations about narrative inquiry and the critics that have challenged whether or not narrative tells the "truth" about the subject (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). In discussing this issue, Clandinin and Connelly (2004) explain that in narrative inquiry, inquirers need to develop a critical lens in their examination of story, field texts, and artifacts. The truth about any experience is in the eye, or voice, of the beholder. This does not mean that facts do not matter, but when examining the experiences of a person and how those experiences influenced their later decisions and perspectives, the memory of the experience is that person's reality. While another person involved may tell a different story about the exact same situation, their perspective is different, and thus, their truth is different. This research looks to examine experiences and truths according to the subject's perspective. The inquirer must have an awareness, or "wakefulness" of space and context throughout the process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 181). I worked throughout the interviews and my analysis of the entire research process to be wakeful of language, context, setting, and situation to be accurate, critical, and authentic at the same time.

Narrative inquiry relies heavily on the relationship between the researcher and the subjects, and concerns about the researcher interjecting her biases on the interpretation of the story are valid. Researchers must strive to develop a relationship built on trust, but not one that sets up a "we" mentality that creates an equality-based relationship between the researcher and subject (Seidman, 2006). One technique I used to help me develop a "we" mentality was beginning the study with my own interview. I had a colleague ask me the

interview questions I planned for my participants, and she recorded my answers in the same manner I planned for my participants. Answering the questions before my participants helped prevent me from "projecting" their answers on to me. It also allowed me time to think about the nature of follow up questioning and how to be inquiring without intrusive. This critical step also allowed me to test the questions and get a feel for how they help develop a discussion. It was essential that I develop trust with my participants; our topic was very personal, and I needed them to trust me so they would open up and tell stories about situations that were difficult, painful, and made them vulnerable. I went through the interviews so that I could know them. In the words of Atticus Finch, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it" (Lee, 1988, p. 85). The exercise of hearing and answering the questions myself allowed me to walk in the shoes of my participants, be a more authentic researcher, and more accurately sense the development of the interview overall.

Research Methodology

Study Participants

I used a snowball technique (Bertaux, 1981) to find potential subjects for the study by sending letters (see Appendix A) to school and district administrators whom I know personally or know of via professional contacts. I have first-hand knowledge that some of the people I contacted are LG through my professional interactions with them or because they are out to a degree that my professional contacts know them to be lesbian or gay. The goal was to find a group of participants that represented several voices and histories. For example, a gay male principal, a lesbian superintendent, and a bisexual

male director of curriculum differ by gender and career paths, yet share a common experience as LG educational leaders. The letter invited them to participate in the study and to pass a second letter (see Appendix B) on to a colleague whom they thought would be willing to participate. Because of my personal experience and exposure to the LG community, I know and understand the interconnectedness of community members; we tend to stick together and protect each other. This sense of community is a strength and resource I thought would help me find participants.

I followed up my initial contact letter with a phone call if the recipient did not reply within one week. I understood that leaders have gatekeepers who may or may not have forwarded the letter, and I thought that making personal contact would help establish and build the trust necessary for the success of the study. What actually happened was very different than my initial plan.

None of the people I contacted via letter were willing to participate in my study. I sent out seven letters and got only two emails back thanking me for the invitation but indicating that they were not able to participate. Neither respondent gave me a reason about why she (both women) didn't want to participate. I tried to contact the other five but could not get through to them. I turned to my network of professional colleagues and even social media for help. I gave the "request for participants" letter to my friends and asked them to pass them along if they knew gay or lesbian administrators. Soon I had four people willing to participate, but they were all men. I became frustrated that all the women I approached to participate said no. Eventually, one of my colleagues in the doctoral program said he knew a woman who might participate, but she would want me to assure her of complete confidentiality. I talked to her on the phone and explained the

measures I had in place to keep confidentiality, and she agreed to participate, but I really wanted a few more women in the study. I was able to make contact with another woman, but our interviews had to be conducted via phone and Skype, as she lived about three hours away from me, and our schedules never allowed us to meet in person.

Frustrated at the small number of women in my study, I spread my net wider to my friends and family living in the Northwest and made contact with two women willing to participate. I conducted all the interviews for the entire study, except for three, in person. I flew to the Northwest on two weekends and met with the women there. Meeting in person gave me a more complete picture of my participants. I especially appreciated when they welcomed me into their homes or offices, as I got a better sense of their lives and I got to know them on a deeper level in person, as opposed to my phone and Skype interviews.

In the end, I had eight participants, four men and four women (see chart in Chapter 4). They span experience levels from one year of administrative work to retired after 25 years in administration. The participants all self-identify as gay or lesbian, not bisexual, and there were no transgender participants. More details about the participants are found in Chapter 4.

Keeping Confidentiality

Once each person agreed to participate in the study, I sent her/him an informed consent document, and we decided where and when the first interview would take place. I let the participants decide where we would meet; I wanted each of them to feel as comfortable as possible. Meeting with each participant individually allowed me to know each person a little and help build a level of trust that was critical for this study.

Participants were asked to reveal very personal aspects of their lives and in doing so were very vulnerable; this personal and professional vulnerability is important to recognize and account for in my analysis. The success of this study depended on each participant's willingness to tell personal stories about their experiences as LG educators, and for that to happen they needed to trust me and my intentions for the study.

Gathering the Data: Interviews and Observations

I prepared standard questions for each initial interview, but I was not married to them; I asked follow up questions and shared personal anecdotes when I felt it would help my participants open up. It was important in the initial interview that I establish trust so that later my participants would share more personal information and stories. I structured the interviews to focus on a different elements each time, but I found that our discussions often crossed over to the subject I planned for the other interview(s). The first interview was developed to focus on personal background, family life, and K-12 school experiences. I thought this would be easier to discuss compared to the topic of sexuality and its relation to career/work, based on my personal experiences. For me it is easier to talk about family and how I identify myself in the personal realm than it is to talk about my identity performance at work, including my experiences as a lesbian administrator and the challenges I have encountered. I found that to be true for most of the participants based on the expanse of the stories my questions elicited from them. While their stories about coming out to family were often detailed and emotionally explicit, the stories about workplace relationships related to sexuality required more follow up and probing.

Each of the participants participated in two to three interviews. Seidman (2006) argues that in-depth interviews help to establish a relationship between the interviewer

and participant, but allow the participant to "reconstruct his or her experience with the topic under study" (p. 15). Each interview took approximately 60 to 120 minutes, a length that allowed for depth in conversation and for me to develop a relationship with each participant. The structure and focus of each interview prompted participants to share stories of experiences about relationships relating to the study's research question; the interviews developed, at times, like a discussion, with the questions serving to help me, the interviewer, stay tuned in to the study's objective (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Though I initially planned questions that would span three interviews, I found after working with my first two participants that much of their answers crossed over into the subjects planned for later interviews. For all but two of the participants, I was able to gather sufficient data in two interviews. The other two participants sat for a third interview because I found their answers to be less narrative; I met with each of them a third time and explicitly asked for stories about their experiences.

The first interview focused on the life history of the subjects and explored the context of their family and educational experiences up to the present time. It also focused on the personal experiences and was more of a conversation that allowed me to share my history and "work toward intimacy of relationship" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 78). This allowed us to establish a foundational relationship, trust, and created a logical beginning for the remainder of the interview(s). Additionally, this helped participants reconstruct the events, people, situations, and experiences that lead to the "how" of what the entire study sought to uncover (Seidman, 2006). This foundational interview was key to establishing my relationship with my participants and the context for the following interview(s).

The second interview focused on asking questions that explored the details of their "present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). It asked them to tell specific stories about being LG in school, how/why they have come out (or not) at school, and how their experiences as leaders had any connection or consequence of being gay or lesbian. The main focus of this interview got to the details of what the participants experienced on a daily basis in their roles as educational leaders. I wanted them to share stories with me about how coworkers treated them, what their work environments were/are like, the climate of their school communities, and the attitudes of their direct supervisors as related to LG people. I also wanted them to think about how they navigated their relationships at work with many different people: teachers, supervisors, parents, students, etc. Though I didn't specifically intend to discuss the different policies that govern each of the states where my participants live, the subject came up with every participant. As I discussed earlier, the politics and policies of a community have a significant impact on the rights and securities of gay and lesbian educators.

This interview built on the foundation of trust established in the first interview and "addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life" (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). The questions asked participants about more than just being lesbian, gay, or bisexual, but considered gender, age, political climate, and career path, and how those critical elements may have shaped their experiences as LG administrators. It asked them about where they may be in the future and how their sexual orientation is an element of those decisions.

The data was collected using interviews and notes for instrumentation. Each participant was interviewed two to three times, as outlined previously. A basic set of interview questions were predetermined to establish a framework of consistency; however, given the nature of the subject's answers, follow up questions were asked as needed. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, and I also took some field notes during each interview. These notes focused on the subject's mannerisms, body language, the setting, and tone of the interview, the elements that could not be communicated in a voice recording.

After each interview, I wrote memos about my observational ideas. I also noted themes that stood out and referred to them later when I listened to the interviews again. I sent the recordings to a transcription service with whom I contracted for all the interviews[6]. After receiving each transcript, I listened to the interview while reading through the transcript to ensure accuracy. While listening, I also made notes about vocal inflections I noticed as they related to ideas and points the participant stressed, places where she/he would hesitate or sometimes laugh. These were important notations because they showed me where I needed to spend some extra time in analyzing an answer, considering the undertones that sometimes say more than the direct answer I was given.

I used Dedoose, an analysis program, to help me code, organize, and analyze the transcripts. Once all the interviews were coded, I outlined common themes and then selected what stories would be the best representations of the stories I heard overall. I

[6] The transcription service provided me with a confidentiality agreement, and the recordings were downloaded to a secure site. The turnaround time for each interview was about four to five days; the service notified me each time one was completed, and I logged on to my account and downloaded the Word document.

referenced my field notes and post-interview memos to support the stories and help me capture the details of my participants' emotions, body language, and tone. I wrote the stories that impacted me the most and that I felt would resonate with the largest audience.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, I grounded my investigation on the goal of telling stories of people and experiences yet untold. I wanted to understand and share the experiences of LG administrators and how they navigated workplace relationships. How did they define their roles as leaders? What situations had they faced as educational leaders that related to their sexuality? I did this with the knowledge that narrative inquiries and research contribute to discussions of social significance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). As Barone (2009) explains in his discussion about the aims of narrative research and narrative researchers:

> This enables readers to vicariously re-experience their everyday world from a previously unavailable vantage point. Unlike a work of pure escapist fantasy, such a text can entice readers into rethinking dimensions of the prevailing doxic structure that serves to constrict their imaginative faculties. (p. 594)

So stories, heard, told, and retold, tap into more that just a conscious level of knowledge, they connect with the unconscious paradigms of social structures, including gender norms, heterosexual norms, and norms associated with particular roles and social settings.

I have written stories that tell about the experiences of the participants through the focus on key events, ideas, and people that have shaped who they are as educational leaders. Some themes that emerged include:

- heteronorming behaviors
- career path bumps and roadblocks

- personal conflict with coming out or being out at work
- positive and negative relationships resulting from coming out
- establishing leadership
- intersectional issues of identity performance, political climate and school/district climate

I chose to follow the representational structure developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997) when presenting the research data. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) explains that portraits "are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspective of the people who are negotiating those experiences" (p. 3). It is logical that a narrative research methodology employs a narrative presentation of my participants' stories. As the portraitist, my voice and autobiographical stories serve to reveal my relationship to some of the experiences of LG administrators. I include some autobiographical portraits because, as Lawrence-Lightfoot reasons, "…the autobiography of the researcher (her history, experience, family background, and cultural origins) also informs and shapes the portraitist's voice, as do her intellectual interests, disciplinary background, theoretical frames, and ideological preoccupations" (1997, p. 105). Furthermore, by using a combination of my voice (the researcher) and my participants' voices, I capture and communicate their unique experiences.

Each chapter begins with a story that illustrates a controlling idea. In Chapters 4 and 5, I use a series of vignettes to illustrate each theme; vignettes allow me to bring life to an idea and unwrap its complexity, yet still be authentic in representing the

participant's voice (Stake, 2010). I also used personal vignettes to position my story alongside the others. My topic of study carries personal significance for me, and I have learned a great deal about my fellow LG administrators and myself throughout this research.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Limitations Related to Subject Sensitivity

As a lesbian administrator in Arizona, I understand all-too well the current climate that makes most educators hesitant about revealing their sexual orientations. While this has allowed me an advantage when establishing a relationship and level of necessary trust with my participants, it has also posed limitations to the validity of the study that I accounted for in several ways.

- I excluded any potential administrators from participating that are currently employed in the district where I currently work. This exclusion helped insure a level of anonymity and separation for my study participants.
- I am sensitive to the legal and career implications of being "outed" as a result of participating in this study. Therefore, I allowed each participant to select where his or her interviews were conducted. By allowing the participants to choose the location of their interviews, I helped them feel more comfortable as I established trust and developed a relationship. Our meeting places and times protected each person's different concern for confidentiality.
- Each participant was also aware that the audio recordings would be kept for one year after the end of the study, and then destroyed.

- All names of people, organizations, and specific locations are pseudonyms. The researcher and all participants signed confidentiality agreements to be kept on file with the university for the required amount of time.
- My observation notes will be kept until publication of the study and then destroyed.

Delimitations Related to Subject Sensitivity

The study was conducted with school and district level administrators throughout major cities in the Southwest and Northwest United States whose political and social climates are vastly different, and thus make it somewhat generalizable it to other cities, states, subpopulations, or times. The communities in the southwest are conservative and did not legally recognize gay marriage or domestic partnership at the time of the study. The communities in the northwest also did not, legally recognize gay marriage, but the issue is on the next election ballot; domestic partnership is legally recognized in the northwestern communities. Political and social climates vary from community to community, but giving voice and documentation to the experiences of LG leaders and how they navigate the various relationships in their profession is valuable for its contribution to educating others in general.

Chapter 4 – Portraits of the Participants and Emerging Themes

I told Justin that he was kind of guy that I would marry but never date; he pursued me for 6 years, throughout middle and high school. After we had an argument one summer day when we were home from college, I jumped into my dad's truck and said, through clenched teeth, "I wish I was a lesbian. Things would be so much easier; women just *get it*." I didn't listen to my own voice until I was 27 years old and married with an 8 month-old son when I fell in love with Jennifer, my best friend of 5 years. She came out to me while trying to heal from a terrible breakup; her revelation to me somehow allowed me the freedom to listen to my own voice and see my life differently. That first "coming out" relationship with Jennifer, like so many, went terribly wrong, but it gave me the courage to be honest with myself and all my friends and family about being a lesbian. My marriage ended amicably, and I met my future wife 8 months later.

Eight educational leaders participated in this study, ranging in age from late 20s to mid-50s, five are currently administrators on a school campus, two work at a district office, and one is a retired principal. Six of the participants live in a southwestern state of the United States, and two live in the Pacific Northwest, though one of these grew up in the same area as the other six.

For this study, I interviewed four women and four men; it was much easier to find male participants than women. In fact, the women did not come to me until several months into my data collection, and after having four women turn down my request to participate. This was surprising to me at first, but the analysis of the data in the responses suggest some possible reasons for this, which I discuss in chapter 6.

Meet the Participants

Patrick was born on the East Coast but his family moved to the Southwest when he was young. Patrick has two siblings and has had a close, loving relationship with his parents throughout his life. Though Patrick graduated college and immediately began teaching, for a while he considered going into the Catholic priesthood. Patrick self-identified as gay when he was in college, and came out to his family soon after; they were supportive and continue to be today. Patrick has been in a long-term committed relationship for the last 15 years, but his partner is not an educator. At the time of the study, Patrick was transitioning between districts after getting a new job at the district level working with professional development and program administration.

Wayne grew up in a small town in the Midwest. He attended college on the West Coast and spent the about 14 years as a professional ballet dancer before becoming a teacher. Wayne has a very large family, with whom he is close; he self-identified as gay in his early 20s and his family was very supportive when he came out to them. Wayne has been in a committed relationship for over 15 years, and his partner is Byron, another participant in the study. At the time of our interviews, Wayne was transitioning into his first elementary principal position in a new district.

Byron, like Wayne, grew up in the Midwest but in a suburb of a large metropolitan city. Byron moved to the Southwest after being in education for about 6 years, but he did not go into education immediately after college. Byron is close to his one sister, and self-identified as gay in college, coming out to his father slowly over the course of a few years. His mother struggled with mental health problems throughout his teens and early adult life, which prevented Byron from having direct conversations with

her about his sexuality. His father is accepting of him and his long-term relationship with Wayne, but reserved about having personal discussions about their relationship or even coming to visit them in their home. Byron attended college near where he grew up and bounced in and out of education for about six years after graduating. He had one very long committed relationship that ended when his partner died, and eventually met Wayne while visiting a mutual friend in California. At the time of our interviews, Byron was the superintendent of a K-8 school district in the Southwest.

Brian, a middle school principal, grew up on the East Coast with his parents and two younger brothers. He sees his parents a few times a year and reports being closer to one brother than the other. Brian self-identified as gay in college, and has discussed his sexuality with his mother but has never had a direct discussion with his father. While both his parents played an active role in his life growing up, Brian was closest to his maternal grandmother. Brian graduated from a college near his hometown and taught for about three years before entering a master's program and landing his first principal job just three years later. Brian moved to the Southwest wanting a change of scenery and experience, and has been in a long-term committed relationship for almost ten years; Brian's partner is not in education.

Megan, a woman in her late 20s, had just completed her first year as a high school assistant principal. She grew up in the Southwest, attended the local university, and became a math teacher in a school in the same community. Megan was a high school teacher for just five years before landing her first assistant principal position in the same district she attended as a child. She self-identified as gay as a teen, but did not come out to her parents of her own volition; her mother discovered her relationship with a

classmate after finding a letter she had written to her girlfriend. Megan told stories about coming out then to the rest of her family and feeling more love than she could have imagined since then. She has a close relationship with both her parents and two brothers and has been in a committed relationship with her partner for eight years. Megan's partner is not in education, but is very supportive of her career and recent advancement into administration.

Diane, a retired principal currently living in the Southwest, grew up on the East Coast in a small town with her parents and brother, all of whom are now deceased. Diane self-identified as gay in her early college years and came out to her family shortly after that. Diane moved to the Southwest early in her career as a teacher and taught at almost every grade from K-12. Diane was a very successful teacher, even winning national awards, before moving into administration. In her mid-40s, Diane was a high school assistant principal for only two years before taking the helm of a large high school after her principal retired. She served in that role for several years, before retiring after a series of disciplinary actions enforced on her as what she sees as a form of direct discrimination. Diane's experience is unique from the others because she shared stories of being a victim of discrimination from her supervisors and even a case of sexual harassment that forced a life-long change in her career path. At the time of our interviews, Diane considered herself married (though not legally recognized by the state) and still lived in the community where she was previously employed, though she talked about wanting to move to a more "liberal" community on the East Coast.

Maria, a middle school principal in the Pacific Northwest, spent most of her childhood in Argentina before her family moved to England for a few years and then later

settled in the mid-western United States. Her family moved to the U.S. when her mother got a position as a professor at a university when she was 15. She and her sister did not know any English when the family moved here, and she talked a lot about how that has given her a unique perspective into the lives and experiences of many of her students' families who are not native English speakers. Maria self-identified as gay in her early college years, and was completely supported and embraced by all her family when she came out. At the time of our interviews, Maria was in a committed relationship of eight years with a teacher at another school and had been a principal for one year. She was also applying for a district position in human resources because she felt her experiences and perspective allowed for her to be a fair and necessary voice for people at the school level, especially the paraprofessionals.

April, a new elementary school principal in the Northwest, was actually born, raised, and attended college in a community in the Southwest near many of the other participants. April did not self-identify as gay until the first few years of her teaching career when she fell in love with one of her colleagues and best friend; she was married to a man at the time. When April came out to her family, they were very supportive and she cherishes a close relationship with them to this day, though they lived in the Southwest. April moved to the Northwest because she wanted a more "accepting" environment for her gay lifestyle. She shared a few stories about her fear of losing her job if people found out she were gay. April and her partner eventually had a daughter but separated after 11 years. At the time of the interview, April had been in a long-term relationship with a school counselor for about seven years and was transitioning into her first elementary principal position in a new, much smaller school district.

My Story

I include my story at points because it is my personal relationship with this topic that has kept me rooted to it for so long. It is my search for a connection and community with other gay and lesbian administrators that motivated me through hours of interviews and months of data analysis. As I have said before, it is story that brings people together, reminds us of our connections, and inspires us to persevere in some of our darkest hours. The beautiful irony of story is that in its familiarity, it is also starkly individual and special.

I am a high school assistant principal living in a suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. I grew up in Denver, Colorado, graduated from the University of Northern Colorado and moved to Arizona to begin my career as an English teacher. I taught for 16 years before moving into administration. I self-identified as gay after falling in love with my best friend, Jennifer, but at the time I was married to a man, Justin, and my son was just one year old. I came out to my husband first, because I loved him, respected him, and could not be dishonest or dishonor him. It was, and still is, one of the most difficult and painful things I have ever done in my life. I came out to my parents and sister shortly after that, and they have never been anything but supportive. For several months I struggled with whether or not I wanted to end my marriage and "live" as a lesbian. My marriage was easy, and Justin was a fantastic man. We were more like brother and sister than spouses, partly because we had known each other since the seventh grade. Eventually, it was being a mother that made me realize that I could never live anything but an authentic life. I reasoned that if I wanted to raise my son to be his own person, find his passion, and

create a life he would be proud of, I had to do the same. I had to be his most primary model for life.

As I discussed previously, while I was a teacher, I never came out at school. I shared my life and my marriage with close friends and family. However, it was my first year as an assistant principal, and our staff holiday party was quickly approaching. My principal expected all the administrators to attend and felt it would be good to bring our spouses; I was completely stressed out about what to do. At the same time, I was approaching my proposal defense date, and having developed a topic that was so personal, I felt increasing conflict about not being out and honest in my professional life. It seemed hypocritical to ask other administrators to share personal experiences and be courageous if I was not willing to do the same. So, I gathered my courage and took my wife to the holiday party. What felt like a very dramatic act to me, was received with kindness, gratitude, and grace. Neither that night, nor any other time since then, did I feel uncomfortable about sharing a very private part of my personal life with my staff members. Yes, some people looked shocked and stammered a bit when I introduced Sloan as my wife, but many commented later that they were proud and honored that I brought her to the party.

Table 2 gives a brief description of the participants and allows for quick reference to some of the characteristics that contribute to the perspectives and stories explored in later sections.

Name	Sex	Age	Birthplace	Current Area of Residence	Out at Work	Career in Education Only	Primary Workplace Location
Patrick	Male	Early 50's	Northeast, US	Southwest	Yes	Yes	Southwest
Wayne	Male	Late 40's	Midwest, US	Southwest	Yes	No	Southwest
Byron	Male	Early 50's	Eastern, US	Southwest	Yes	No	Midwest and Southwest
Brian	Male	Mid 30's	Eastern, US	Southwest	Yes	Yes	East and Southwest
Diane	Female	Mid 50's	Eastern, US	Southwest	No	Yes	Southwest
Megan	Female	Early 20's	Southwest, US	Southwest	Yes and No	Yes	Southwest
Maria	Female	Late 40's	Chile, S. America	Northwest	Yes	Yes	Midwest and Northwest
April	Female	Early 40's	Southwest, US	Northwest	No	Yes	Southwest and Northwest

Table 2. Participant characteristics.

Family Stories: Patrick and Megan

One of the biggest formative influences on who we are as adults are the relationships we have with family as we grow up. Whether that familial relationship is a daily presence or more removed via death, divorce, or other reasons, whether supportive and nurturing or abusive and abandoning, the relationships we have with our parents and other family members guide our path to self-awareness, confidence, and a sense of being and security in the world. It also shapes the relationships we have as adults. All my participants talked to me about their relationships with their families, and most of them were positive and supportive. However, a few stories were particularly insightful about

the power of family and how it shapes our identities as adults, our lens as educators, and our security about how we relate to the world.

Patrick

I met Patrick for our first interview at a study room in the university library. Patrick greeted me with warmth and a friendly smile. His small round glasses and buzzed gray hair age him a bit and give him a peaceful sophistication. Patrick is not soft spoken per se, but I sense right away that he reserves displays of emotion for people who have earned it. When I asked about his family and relationship with his parents, he perked up and answered with reverence and respect in his voice.

Neither of his parents had a college education, but according to Patrick, his father was very well read. Wednesdays were important because that was his father's day off from work, and he took Patrick and his siblings to the library to check out books. Learning and education were very important in his family. Patrick's mother hoped that her three children would grow up to be a doctor, a lawyer, and a priest. Catholicism was a foundational tenet in Patrick's family, especially for his mother. Patrick was active in the church and strongly considered becoming that priest; his mother fervently hoped one of her sons would become a priest. The priesthood offered a connection with his mother but also a way to deal with his growing awareness of his homosexuality that was in direct conflict with his upbringing.

> In thinking about it, in my mind, being a priest meant I had to be celibate, which meant that I didn't have to worry about having that [gay] identity, because you don't have a sexual life. That was my thinking. You don't have an orientation if you don't have a sexual identity and then you can live your life.

Patrick did not become a priest; he went on to attend college in Texas and become a theater teacher. Patrick came out to his parents in college and, in the fashion his father would respect, gave them a book to read to help them understand what he was going through. His relationship with his father eventually found a nature and rhythm similar to its state before he came out, but he talked about being more connected in a deeper way with his mom. She was upset that he told his brother and sister about being gay before telling her, but moved past that and now visits often and has a loving relationship with his partner. Patrick's mother was conflicted for a long time because of her strong faith and belief that Patrick would not go to heaven after death. She would say, "But honey, I worry about your soul in the afterlife," but they came to an understanding and she no longer expresses this worry. Patrick's strong relationship with his parents helped him develop the trust necessary to come out to them, despite his fear that their relationship with the church may sever that relationship.

Megan

I met Megan for our first interview at her home. I "found" Megan through a colleague in my doctoral program, and as part of her agreement to participate I had to be explicitly clear about the confidentiality of my study. When I asked Megan where she'd like to meet and offered to come to her school for convenience, she was clearly uncomfortable: Megan is not out at school. Megan and her partner have a modest home in a large city and recently rescued a puppy that challenged the focus of our interview at times. Megan and her partner were preparing for a long trip to Europe with her partner's mother, so our interview had a rushed undertone, but because she is clearly a high-energy person, I could tell it would be like that anyway. Megan is in her late 20s and was clearly

nervous at the beginning of our interview; she had never talked about any of her life as a lesbian and new job as an assistant principal so explicitly.

Like Patrick, Megan grew up in a middle class suburb in the southwestern part of the United States. Education was always valued in her family, but neither of her parents were educators. When I asked Megan about her parents, she didn't talk about her father specifically at all; the majority of her answers focused on her mother. She talked about having a close relationship with both her parents, and her two brothers, and throughout our interviews, it was evident that these relationships gave her a lot of support.

> My family is extremely tight knit. They're really liberal, and I'm very close with my parents. They were always very supportive of me. They're still married. I have two brothers; they're my best friends. My extended family is very close: I think I'm closer with my cousins than some people are with their brothers and sisters. We do everything together; it's just fun. They were always supportive. (Megan)

Like many of the stories my participants told, Megan's mother had the hardest time coming to terms with her sexuality. It was interesting that in every interview when I asked about family and relationships, the majority of the answers focused on mothers and relationships with mothers. Megan explained,

> I came out when I was seventeen to my parents. At first it was kind of a shock, I think, for, especially for my mom. My mom, straight or gay or whatever, would not want to talk to me about sex in general. So everything was very taboo in that sense. Um, but she did have a really hard time with [my coming out], for a little while. But I've never felt shunned or different. Well that's not... I guess if I had a male partner I think they'd be a little bit more comfortable. The only reason I feel different is 'cause sometimes I feel like they don't know how to introduce her to certain people.

Megan's parents have a strong affection for her current partner and call her a "second daughter." Megan's relationships with all her family continue to be as strong as when she was growing up, and they even ask her if she and her partner will have kids some day.

Family continues to be the foundational strength that made Megan the person she is, as is evident when she hopes that one day, Kristen (her partner), will "be her wife."

Mentorships: Megan and Diane

Our relationships with professional mentors, both formal and informal, give us lessons as positive and negative models. I wanted to know if the participants had ever experienced a situation where a supervisor, who should act and behave as a mentor, was negative or discriminatory and how they handled it. I also wanted to know if their relationships with mentors affected how their performativity at work. How did they confront situations of discrimination? Did their mentors know they were LG and how did that knowledge impact their relationship? Only two of the school districts out of the seven had antidiscrimination policies protecting the rights of LGBT employees, so unlike sexual or racial discrimination, administrators have little or no job protection. Megan's story resonated because it's indicative of the courage that many of the participants showed when faced with a choice to confront bigotry or to stay quiet.

Megan

I asked Megan to tell me about her mentors, and she had several stories about her first principal, Christine, when she was a new teacher. Christine was the first principal to give Megan a job, and she challenged her to take on teacher leadership roles as a second year teacher. Christine saw Megan's leadership potential early on and fostered it. Megan credits her with being the main inspiration for her to move to administration and uses Christine as a model for much of the way she works with teachers. However, Megan's first principal in her current role as assistant principal, Teresa, tested her on a personal level that Megan did not expect.

As Megan begins to tell this story she looks down with disappointment. I sense that she is struggling with what she is about to tell me because she is conflicted with her professional loyalty to her current principal and her loyalty to her personal life and relationships. She explains that Teresa and another administrator often made comments about students and how they dressed: "Look at those shorts. Is that kid begging to be called gay and get beat up?" They used the word *gay* in a derogatory way during meetings and mocked teachers and students who didn't fit gender stereotypes. Megan explains that she sat quietly in those meetings for much of the school year, not knowing how to confront the situation. Then one day she had enough and went to Teresa to have a conversation.

She walked into her office one afternoon and nervously asked if they could talk about something. After closing the door gently and sitting down, Megan explained to Teresa that it made her uncomfortable when she and the other administrator mocked students and made gay slurs; she also reminded Teresa that as the principal, she was the example for the entire school, so being discriminatory was not a good example to set. They had a good conversation and Teresa apologized. About a month or so later, Teresa made a snide comment about a student and immediately looked to Megan and apologized, "I'm sorry. That was out of line, wasn't it?" Megan smiled and responded "Yes."

Despite her fear of repercussions, Megan, a new administrator, confronted her principal about discriminatory language. Megan became the mentor and realized the power that she had in using her voice.

Many of the participants told at least one story about the fear of having to confront someone in a position of authority, but not all of them had a similar resolution to Megan's.

Diane

My interviews with Diane were conducted over the phone because she lives far enough away that travel was difficult, but once I established communication with her, she was more than eager to participate. Diane is a fast-talker, and I knew immediately that her energy over the phone is a fraction of the energy she exudes in person. Diane is bubbly and confident about who she is, including her vast experience as an educator. There were times during our interviews where she would pause to yell at the dog, take her wife coffee (it was an expectation every morning), and curse when she became emotional about a particular topic. I appreciated her candor; Diane is warm, and I could picture her embracing me in a welcome hug if we met in person. Diane has a big personality and her voice commands attention; however, she laughs easily and often and loves to tell stories about her professional accomplishments.

I asked Diane about her most influential mentors and while her answer was an outlier in comparison to the other participants, it was indicative of her as a person and professional. Diane's saw her students as her most influential mentor(s). Throughout both our interviews Diane's answers were always completely student-centered; she characterized her sole purpose for every decision she made as a teacher and administrator as doing what's best for kids and fostering genuine connections with kids.

> I understood the bullied kid. I understood the kid who got made fun of. I understood absolutely the alternative lifestyle kid who wasn't ready to come out yet. But you know how you can see and you know that they just haven't figured

> it out yet? I absolutely had more empathy for those kids, and if a kid ever came out to me and wanted to tell their parents, I was always very supportive. I guess I became the champion of the underdog. (Diane)

Diane's "advocate" approach to working with kids translated to the way she mentored teachers as an administrator. Instead of talking about principals and superintendents who served as her mentors, Diane's reflection on her mentors and her role as a mentor focused on students. When working with teachers who needed significant development, Diane said,

> Leaders should be in the classroom every day. Leaders should be extensions of teachers. Leaders should be there as a resource for teachers. Leaders should be actually there for the kids. You need to be a counselor when you're a leader, and if there's a bad teacher out there, you need to not turn the other way, like 80% of the administrators do.

All the participants in this study self-identified as gay or lesbian at a young age, and all had come out to their parents and other family members. Though everyone talked about at least one family member, usually a parent, having some level of difficulty with learning them coming out, that person had eventually come around and accepted them. In fact, in all the discussions about family and acceptance, it was evident that every participant had a close relationship with their families, regardless of generation or location in the United States. It is possible that these strong family relationships that support every participant's life contributes to her/his level of comfort in being out at work or working to confront prejudice at work.

The participants' stories suggested the relationship between family and work for LG administrators found that positive support at home and acceptance from family was related to the extent that participants felt more security and safety about sharing their personal lives at work, specifically talking about their partners or spouses. A positive and

supportive family and home life suggested that participants were more likely to be out at work, and in Megan's case, be out to her administrative team. Their practice of being LG, talking about being LG, and living in LG relationships allowed their performance as leaders to include aspects of being LG, living an LG lifestyle and less pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations in their workplace relationships.

The participants' responses to the questions exploring the role and relationship of mentors in their professional lives suggest that when confronted with discrimination and slurs, even from someone in a mentor role, many participants, like Megan, actually became the mentor and advocated for equity and acceptance. In fact, mentorship was an important driving force in many of the participants' decisions to go into education, staying in education, and their motivations to advocate for issues as educational leaders. Specifically, serving as a mentor and role model for students, particularly LG students, was a driving force in the actions and advocacy of every participant. A few of the participants discussed being lesbian or gay with their mentors, and those that had reported that their mentors held positive feelings about LG people. This may have contributed to a more professionally supportive relationship, and most certainly accounts for how the participants interacted with their mentors.

This chapter captured critical elements of the study's participants and explored two of the significant themes that developed from the data. Chapter 5 will continue to explore the remaining three themes in the same structure and conclude with related discoveries.

Chapter 5 - Navigating Professional Relationships

The limited number of stories and research studies regarding LG educational administrators brings to light the lack of understanding we have of how these leaders navigate professional relationships with several groups of important stakeholders: their superiors and their staff. This chapter tells some of these stories and captures significant experiences of LG school and district administrators as they navigate some of those relationships. Structured like chapter 4, this chapter examines the relevant remaining themes: relationships with superiors, relationships with teachers and staff, and the effects of isolation versus support in the professional environment.

Relationships With Superiors: Patrick, Diane, and Maria

Patrick

As mentioned previously, at the time of the study and interviews, Patrick was in transition to a new position in a new district and building professional relationships with new people. While we were talking about how he had always been out at work, I heard hints of internal conflict in some of his answers. I probed him to talk about if he was out to his new colleagues, and that is where Patrick expressed some hesitation. Patrick talked about going to lunch with the people, including his supervisor, in his new department and shared this,

> At lunch, there were lots of opportunities for me to talk about my partner. I chose not to because I don't know what my director's politics are. I don't know what his beliefs are. I find myself, even at this stage in the game, not knowing what might happen if I talk about it. Tomorrow, I'm going to take Justin's car to work. It's a very—it's a different car. It's a different vehicle. It might come up. I'll just have to say, "Yeah, it's my partner." This or that. I haven't officially started working there yet, so I don't know. It's weird.

The awareness that Patrick had about his colleagues and supervisor potentially having issues with his sexuality and personal relationships was new for him. His choice to not talk about it and description that the situation was "weird" is indicative of many of the stories I heard and reflects the research of Yoshino (2001) and Lugg (2003). Furthermore, all the participants who talked about these choices and situations were confident that heterosexual people never experienced them. All of the participants expressed feeling conflicted about when, if, and to whom they could be out about their sexuality. And all of the participants described behaviors that align with passing or heteronormative performance on some level (Yoshino, 2001; Lugg, 2003, 2006; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). This is not to say that many of the participants wanted to hide or lie about their sexuality, but every participant understood the possible effects being open about their sexual orientation on relationships they had or were building with their supervisors. Would there be consequences professionally? Would they be respected in the same way? Would their superiors support them if an issue arose relating to their sexuality?

The awareness of potential consequences in the workplace and on professional relationships reflects the research on leadership and fear (de Leon & Brunner, 2012; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Tooms, 2007). This fear is a result of the heteronormative culture of public education. Patrick felt a lack of safety and security and protected himself by not sharing information about being gay. Elements of his relationships with his new colleagues were shaped by his fear and sense of vulnerability. While the lasting effects of his choices are not evident in the scope of this study, such choices and their direct effects on a leader's career are evident in other participants' stories.

Two participants told stories that were different from Patrick's, though they both represent experiences reflective of a career continuum. Diane experienced a traumatic situation that forever changed the trajectory of her career, while Maria discovered support and compassion she never knew existed.

Diane

Without anti-discrimination policies in place, gay, lesbian, and bisexual educators can be dismissed at will. Diane told me about her experience as a principal where she and eight other lesbian leaders were targeted by governing board members and district leaders and eventually lost their jobs.

> I got non-renewed my third year, and that came from a horrible assistant superintendent who, at a coffee hour—not a coffee hour—at a happy hour. I have her on tape naming eight assistant principals or principals in AUSD who are lesbians, and she said that she was going to get rid of them in less than 16 months, and she got rid of all of us in less than 16 months. We pursued filing a class action lawsuit and each of us, all 8 of us, needed—well, one of the 8 wouldn't even go talk to the lawyer 'cause she was so scared. But the 7 of us went, and four of them were very scared because they would have to come out to their family. Three of them were in favor; four of them were not even out to their parents. You've got to remember, I'm 54, some of these people are in their 60s. Back in the '60s and '70s, you just didn't talk about [being gay or lesbian]. You didn't tell your parents, you didn't tell anybody or else you were shunned. So many of these women went through their whole careers closeted. A few of them were really [committed to pursuing the lawsuit], but none of us had the $30,000 we needed to make it happen.

That was the last year Diane was a principal; she had worked enough years in education that she retired, but actually went back to the classroom and taught for two more years in another district.

It made sense that the women who were not even out to their families were the most scared about being part of the lawsuit; this isolation worked against many of the participants in many different situations, which I explore later. Diane's story about her

relationships with her superiors is an important example of the powerlessness that some gay and lesbian educators have in states and districts without antidiscrimination policies. The lack of antidiscrimination policies makes potential victims of LG leaders while protecting the heteronormative practices and biases of public education organizations. Even though these leaders had a common cause and developed some sense of community, it was not a community that empowered them to overcome the wrongs that had been done to them.

Conversely, Maria offered a very different kind of story about how supervisors who are supportive and compassionate can affect career trajectories in a positive way.

Maria

The political climate in the Pacific Northwest is more protective of gay and lesbian rights in general (Hunt, 2012). Washington passed laws allowing gay marriage in 2013, and Oregon recognizes same-sex domestic partnership. However, Maria's large school district did not have an anti-discrimination policy as part of school board policy. During Maria's first year as a principal, a student teacher at a neighboring school was reprimanded and later released from his practicum for telling a student that he was gay. This caused a major uproar in the district and community. As a result, the superintendent organized a forum with the school board and some of the gay and lesbian district employees; Maria was asked to be a part of it. She, was scared, but said this;

> Maria: Our equity coordinator and I are very good friends, and she said the superintendent wants administrators and teachers to come and talk to the board. So he never directly asked me, but I said okay. I sat down at the district office with probably 150 people watching, the seven board members, myself, and four teachers—nobody else stepped up—in a circle, having this conversation. Then around the room were people who just came to listen. Parents, gay and straight, other.

Interviewer: They were not allowed to participate?

Maria: No. They were just—it was just kind of like a fishbowl. Then other people, other administrators were there that I knew were gay, but they weren't sitting there next to me. That's when the conversation happened. That was the first time that I was like, Oh fuck! Did I do the right thing? Because sitting next to me was the board member —she's no longer a board member—that represented the side that dismissed the student teacher and was public about the issue in the first place.

Interviewer: Wow.

Maria: Anyhow, and I sat there and she was crying and she was crying and she was crying. I finally just gave her some tissues. I don't know why she ever cried. I don't know if it was too emotional. I don't know what it was, but she sat next to me. The superintendent sat there and said, "I just want to open up the conversation." That's all he said, nothing else, and he sat there and it was silence, and there was silence, and there was silence. Finally, I said, "Well, my name's Maria. I'm principal at Cherry Hills." And I told my story. That was the first time in the district that I was like, "Oh my goodness. Here we go." The rest of that meeting was great. There was Marcus, a teacher somewhere else in the district, who talked about feeling alone and not being able to put his partner's picture on the table. The superintendent said, "You can do it. You can do it right away. Put his picture up there." Marcus was like "No, I can't. No, I can't, because I—right now I don't know that the same thing that happened to that student teacher is not going to happen to me." There was a dad there that stood up and said Marcus, you are a hero, and I'm glad my son has you as a teacher. I mean, there was so much support.

While Maria admitted that she felt the exercise was a political show to benefit the superintendent, it resulted in her and the other participants feeling much safer in the district and a deeper level of trust with the district leadership. Additionally, the school board adopting a non-discrimination policy and the dismissal of an LG employee for merely telling the truth about her/his private life is less likely to happen again. While this one act of policy-making will not completely reverse heteronormative practices in Maria's district, it will serve to protect employment for LG employees and raise

consciousness that LG educators work in the district, have contact with students and have a positive role in the educational system.

Patrick, Diane, and Maria's stories demonstrate the critical nature of leadership and how important, yet tentative relationships, with supervisors can be for LG administrators. The authority structure of every employer/employee relationship sets up a situation that makes the employee vulnerable and dependent on her/his supervisor. This feeling of vulnerability is intensified for LG administrators given the variables that weigh in the relationship. Patrick felt vulnerable because he was the new member of a team and didn't know his new colleagues well enough to feel safe talking about being gay. Diane experienced vulnerability as a direct threat to her job, and found that even in some instances, the power of a leader to discriminate can be untouchable. Maria's vulnerability was met with compassion and understanding and demonstrated that supervisors and district leaders who embody values of inclusion are the key to developing safe, professional environments for LG administrators.

Relationships With the Community: Byron and Maria

Byron

Byron is a superintendent and has a very public role; because he is often the face of his school district, being gay caused conflict for him at times. We talked about his relationship with the community, including parents, and how it has been affected by his sexuality. Byron has always been open about being gay, but told me about a time when he thought he may have to change that as he sought a promotion. He considered hiding parts of his life, like his personal relationship with Wayne, if he took on a more public position. He wondered if his sexuality might be an issue for the board or if the more

public job of being superintendent put his personal life and the district at increased risk of public scrutiny. He reflected about whether or not he was willing to change his practice of being out for a more heteronormative performance at work. Ultimately, he got the promotion to superintendent and decided not to hide his relationship with Wayne. In fact, after he got the job, he invited the entire district leadership team over to his house and shared his life with everyone. He said this about the experience:

> I was nervous. I thought, "Okay, this whole thing could just backfire —because Wayne's going to be there. They're going to see pictures. They're going to see whatever. I have a life with this person." I wasn't going to hide anything. I thought there was a potential that there could be a problem. Then when there wasn't and I found that people were just so warm about who I was and was accepting, it just gave me even more confidence. I'm not the kind of person that feels like I have to really talk about this openly unless I feel like it or I get to know someone and they really wanna know.
>
> I think a lot of people don't even know [I'm gay], and they don't even care, and that's just fine. I never hide it and I never try to have a façade or something that I hide behind.

Byron's performance as an educational leader included his gay relationship; he chose not to separate his personal lens of being a gay man with his role of being a superintendent. The result of this was a more secure relationship with his school community, the board, and his administrative colleagues. In fact, one of the more conservative board members was supportive enough to invite Byron and his partner to a birthday party. It is possible that Byron's confidence and comfort in sharing his private life allowed the board member to follow his lead and do the same. However, what is significant about this act is that the highest authority of the district, the school board and its members, acknowledged Byron's value and contribution as a professional over his sexual orientation.

Maria

So much of what school administrators do involves making connections with the community, including parents. More and more, school administrators, as well as teachers, take on the role of social worker, counselor, nurse, psychologist, etc. The school principal is not just an instructional leader; the principal often helps students navigate their relationships at home and vice versa. Maria told me about two of her middle school students who were beginning their social transition to the opposite gender and how she and the school counselor were serving to make the transition smoother for the students' parents. She explained,

> We have a kid right now who's transitioning from male to female. It's gonna be pretty darn quick here before he makes that final decision and his mom's gonna have to strap on her pantyhose because it's gonna be a bumpy ride. T's already identifying as a girl and doesn't want to be in choir anymore because when the teacher says, "Okay, all boys stand up," or all girls it's awkward. He wears full-on makeup and is letting his hair grow, and wore a beautiful sweater and scarf for picture day. It's going to happen. The counselor has contacted mom. We've given her resources through TransActive. Mom is struggling to support him and everything that goes with that.
>
> Then we have a sixth-grade girl who dresses like a boy, wants to be called by a boy name. Her parents are Arabic. I can't even understand anything they're saying, so we're trying to figure out how we're gonna support them and be culturally respectful and responsive to their needs, as well.
>
> Somebody said it very well the other day. I don't know if it was a staff member or if I saw it on TV. Somebody said, "Before we do math and reading, we have to make sure that they're [the kids] eating breakfast, make sure that they are clean," and the list went on. "Then we can teach math and reading."

Maria expressed her commitment to her students and their parents, as well as the community in general, to help them navigate situations like these. Her perspective as a lesbian made her comfortable talking to parents and students about sensitive topics because she understands the desire to be heard.

Relationships With Teachers: Brian and Wayne

Brian

Brian moved to the Southwest after landing a job as a middle school principal. While he was already an elementary level principal back east, he had recently realized that his 10-year relationship was going nowhere and felt he needed a change of scenery. He understood the community at his new school to be more conservative than the community he left. Brian was soon confronted with the decision about whether or not he could share that he was gay with his teachers and what effect that might have. Brian did share his personal life with his teachers, but described how he came to regret it. He felt that sharing so much about his personal life compromised his authority as a leader. He explained, "At that school, I felt like it was the first school that I let my lives be integrated, and then I felt like I was too close, so I couldn't be an effective leader." The balance between sharing one's personal life and keeping it private was reiterated several times throughout my conversations with Brian. He continued to make decisions about how to navigate these relationships into his second principal position in the district.

> I think [sharing part of my personal life] causes me to be more reflective about my interactions with people and how I've built trust with—because I've always kind of said, well, if I can gain respect and trust, and they truly, whether it's parents or staff, really like me for who I am and for what I'm doing, and what my convictions are, then if it ever comes up, it won't be a problem. So, I think that I'm really conscious about how I'm building relationships and how I'm navigating building trust and motivating people to work.
>
> But I think in some ways, running those scenarios is what I've had to do. I'm navigating this relationship, this friendship. I'm meeting this new person. Okay, when is the right time to let them know [I'm gay]? What's going to happen if I do? What impact—who do they know that's going to—it's constantly planning and thinking about what's happening, or what's going to happen.
> I constantly run those scenarios, because I have to protect something because being gay could be used against me. It could hurt me, or someone could hurt me

> with it. I think when you do that over and over again, then it becomes a skill - I like to think of it as a skill now - a survival skill.

Brian's story about his relationships with teachers and the choices that directly impacted them reflect the tentative relationships that LG leaders often have with their staff. As administrators, they sit in an institutional place of authority, but the community's support and recognition of LG rights (or lack thereof) may makes them vulnerable to potential backlash (Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Lipkin, 1999). Brian's comments about developing "survival skills" reflects the same vulnerability Byron expressed, even though he sat at the head of the institutional authority structure. Brian's leadership was affected by his previous relationships with teachers and was partly influenced by the fear and vulnerability that LG educators experience (Harbeck, 1992; Fraynd & Capper, 2003; Jackson, 2007).

Wayne

Unlike Brian, Wayne talked about being out to his staff throughout his entire career in education, including his positions in leadership; however, in his new role as a first year principal, his concerns about relationships with teachers focused more on establishing boundaries as a leader. Wayne had this to say about having teachers to his home for social events:

> I can have staff over. I've had staff over to the house. I haven't had this staff over to my house. Not because I don't want to, but I hear conflicting things about how much [leaders] should hang out with [their] staff socially. I'm a social person, so I can do that, but then it's also I think like, "If I'm going have a party at my house, I want to have a party at my house." You know what I mean?
>
> Generally, what we do is we have the staff party and then most of the staff leaves, so then we have friends come over later so that we have a party. The thing I'm just leery about with having people over and having them at my house is if they're going to be drinking alcohol, and then if something happens because of that. You

> know what I mean? Then that's like, "Oh, they were at the principal's house and then this happened.

Wayne's relationship with teachers had always been centered on professional responsibilities, even though he had never hid his sexuality from his teachers. However, like Brian and all of the other participants, Wayne did acknowledge that there had always been a voice in the back of his mind that wondered if being gay would someday be an issue in those relationships. When staff members asked about his weekend or questions related to how he spent time outside of school, he used the pronoun "we" and knew that more probing questions may follow. He said,

> I don't know if it's the same for everyone, because there are times when I answer a question with "we" and I anticipate the next question asking me to clarify who "we" is. I wouldn't say the first time it ever comes up where I say "we" they're like, "Well, who's we?" or whatever. But when I'm asked, I say, "It's Byron." Every time that next question comes up, there's a thought in my head saying, "Oh, how's this going to go?" There's always a little bit of hesitation back there for me, but I go forward with it.

Understanding that sharing personal information about being gay comes with the reality that it could change or affect the relationship with a teacher (or many teachers) was evident for Wayne, and all the other participants. However, Wayne was unwilling to let the possibility of that change his answer.

Wayne and Brian, as well as several other participants, demonstrate the social awareness good leaders must have. Social awareness allows a leader to gauge the feelings, political underpinnings, and guiding values of a situation so that they are better able to guide their team and organization (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). In their relationships with staff, fear of social or professional backlash for being gay took a back seat to the needs of their school and the requirements of being an effective leader. The

significant finding here is that for LG leaders, the choices about what to say to whom, how to say it, when to share it, etc. are conscious, planned, and considered in light of a very real vulnerability. Ultimately, six of the nine participants made the conscious choice to be out to their staff members, but they also described doing so with some level of fear or hesitation that their sexuality could become an issue in those professional relationships.

Isolation Versus Support: April, Megan, Maria, and Byron

One of the most significant themes that emerged from my research was the impact that an environment of isolation or support has on leadership. Many of the participants told stories about how isolation had forced them to dishonor their personal convictions by lying about their sexuality, but a few, like Maria and Byron, were able to talk about how an environment of support had a positive affect on their leadership of an organization and its people. They both felt they were more effective leaders as a result of the LG supportive environment.

April

April welcomed me into her home for our interviews. She was warm and gracious, and she seemed interested and relaxed throughout our time together. Our first interview happened right before the school year began, and the second occurred about two months later. Over 13 years ago, April and her partner made a deliberate choice to leave the Southwest for a more gay-friendly community in the northwestern part of the country. When she talked about her choice to move to a less conservative state she had this to say,

> I made a decision when I moved to the Northwest that I would be out, and just not worry about it, and it was 100% fine. I never had one single problem. I had supportive administrators when I was a teacher. I had a child. I was pregnant out to here [uses her hands to show her belly enlarged], walking around teaching fifth grade, and it wasn't a problem. Everybody knew. It was very, very supportive.

At the time of our interviews, April was beginning her first job as a principal in a new school district, one much smaller than her previous district. She was recruited by the superintendent to apply for the position and had been advised during the interview process that the school needed some significant change in the order of leadership and teacher accountability. The previous principal was essentially run out by a few of the teachers, who were also leaders in the teachers' union. Much of the staff had taught at the school for a long time, but did not live in the community where they worked.

The school had a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, but also had a very active parent volunteer base. As soon as April was named as the new principal, the neighboring Baptist church quickly developed a relationship with her and was financially generous in supporting her efforts to provide resources for professional development, student uniforms, and other necessary supplies for the school. April talked about how thankful she was for the church and their support of the school, but was also very nervous that it would be jeopardized if they found out she was a lesbian. Her previous convictions about being out at work, the motivation for her move so many years ago, were now being challenged. Her new role in this new school, coupled with her responsibility to build new relationships with the community, caused her a lot of personal conflict. Specifically, April was afraid that if the Baptist church found out she was a lesbian, they might end their support of the school, which would ultimately hurt the kids at her school. She confided,

> I have this big, big fear that if they [the church] ever found out [that I'm a lesbian], that it would be enough for them to cut ties with the school, even though that would be so wrong to do, because it's for the kids, not for me, but I worry about that. I'm not confident, knowing what I know about people with really, really conservative views, if they knew that cutting ties with the school would ultimately hurt kids, that it would be enough to stop it. You know? It's hard. I feel really isolated.

April was forced to make a choice to sideline her conviction about being out and honest about her personal life to preserve a key relationship that supported her school. She passed as heterosexual to the church group, conforming to their expectations and assumptions about her sexuality. She chose to do this because she felt that the politics of people's belief systems and the church could have a significant negative impact on many lives-- kids' lives. But the price she had to pay for that was to lie about who she was.

Megan

Like April, Megan was in a new leadership position, having just finished her first year as an assistant principal. Megan's expressed a lot of personal conflict about being out and feeling isolated as a LG educator throughout our interviews. She wanted very much to be an example to students and LG teachers, but felt vulnerable and without a reliable support system. While she had told her administrative team that she was a lesbian early in the school year, she chose not to share it with teachers. I asked her about that and she mused,

> Why aren't more people out? Because they're afraid. If everyone that was gay was out, people wouldn't have so much fear, you know. Your mailman would be out, and you hairdresser, and whatever. Teachers - I think teachers are the most closeted people in our culture, and probably admin, too; although, I don't know. I think I'm less closeted. I don't know if it's because I'm getting older or if it's because I'm in a position of power a little bit more and I'm thinking, you know what? Screw it!

Megan felt less vulnerable about losing her job as an administrator than she did as a teacher, because she had support from her administrative team, including her principal. However, she expressed the same vulnerability she has always felt when talking about her relationships with students and parents.

> I'm afraid of being called a pervert more than anything. I'm afraid of a parent telling me they don't want their kid alone with me because [I'm gay]. Or if a girl student felt that way- a young girl was afraid to be alone with me. That would just break my heart. I wouldn't even know what to do. I've thought about it and I get sad just thinking about it, so...

Megan explained that her fear and feelings of isolation forced her to stop coaching basketball after only one year. While she loved it and talked about building significant relationships with her student athletes, the fear of a parent finding out she was gay and using it against her was enough to make her quit.

As a result of the unsupportive environment for LG people, both April and Megan reported feeling isolated and that they had to change aspects of their identities in public settings and in their performances as leaders; they had to lose the LG and conform to heterosexual norms because of the assumptions made about their sexuality and their fear of losing something. Megan and April were victims of the heteronormative school culture that forced them to alter their professional choices, their relationships with students, deny their personal interests, and even deny their personal lives and relationships. While each leader's choice was made for different reasons, they were both made as a result of heteronormative biases that restrict LG leaders from navigating their professional lives with the same freedoms as heterosexual leaders. April's choice was made to protect the resources going to her school and students; Megan's choice was made to protect her employment and security.

Maria

Unlike April and Megan, Maria did not feel isolated in the same way, yet she had a community of LG administrators with whom to connect. Maria worked in an environment that supports LG people, as communicated from the district employment policies down to a group of LG educators from around her district. Maria leaned on several of the people in that group and served as a mentor to some of them. While her school district did not formally acknowledge the group, she was confident that district leaders were aware of it.

> Our new chief economic officer is a female and gay. Our guy in charge of data for the entire district, who used to be with the Department of Ed., he's gay. There are gay principals at the elementary and middle levels, but we only have gay vice principals at the high school level. At the middle level, out of the eight, there are two of us. At the elementary level, there are four, and a bunch of VPs. So, there are a lot of us. Yeah, and we get together and talk about what's going on and any concerns, and how to navigate it.

Maria's school district was the most public about supporting LG administrators and other employees. Their non-discrimination policies demonstrated the values of the local community and those of the state. Of all the participants, Maria had been the most public about being a lesbian, which translated to a freedom and safety that most of the others did not have. For example, when I asked her if she had ever experienced discrimination or been fearful of losing her job because of her sexuality, she was the only person who said no. Her only recollection of insecurity about safety and security was in college; while in college in the 1980s, Maria saw two lesbian students get kicked out of their dorm after the university discovered their relationship.

Byron

The power of community support for LG administrators was also significant for Byron, though the beginning years of his professional career were very different. Byron started his career in the early 1970s in the Midwest, in a suburb of a very large city. While gay rights were certainly in the news, the country had yet to change civil rights laws in favor of gays. Byron and his best friend, also a gay teacher, struggled for a few years to find comfort in the suburban community, but ultimately moved to the city where they found a much larger, more LG supportive community. He talked about how his move to each new suburban city forced him to hide his sexuality:

> It's kind of weird because when I first got to M_ I kind of went back into the closet. When I came here [current city in the southwest], I kind of did the same thing. I was a principal at Applegate Middle School. I was very paranoid because it was a really conservative community, and people warned me. It's like, "You're not going to survive there. You just better watch out." I never talked about my personal life. I don't know if it was just from inside me or if I really needed to be. It seemed like there were some little things happening in the beginning that were some red flags and so I was very, very cautious and really separated my life completely.
>
> For the 6 years I was at Applegate, no one there really knew I was gay. I always used "I" for the most part. There was a very small group there toward the end that I would hang around with that knew, and we would do things together, like Wayne and I would go out with them and party and stuff. We always had this sort of agreement that we'd keep it that way. Then when I came to the district office, I was really nervous about it and talked to the superintendent. Then after that, did that whole leadership team thing where everyone was in our house and it was just like, "Okay." That's when I really made my sort of public statement about it, I guess. I never had really close friends from here, but then, all of a sudden that just changed overnight.

Byron found that the support from his superintendent and the community had a direct impact on his leadership. It was evident that the sense of security and safety empowered his leadership; it allowed him to focus on his job, rather than worry about keeping his job.

While the larger community in the Southwest is conservative, the relationships he has built with the school board and his colleagues are what ensure his safety.

> Now being here for as long as I have been probably gives me more confidence. I don't think it's about the power of my position as much as it is just the comfort level and having been around for 18 years. Yes, there's always a danger of that a Facebook campaign could start, or something else that slanders me, but I have so many people who would just come to my defense that I don't even really worry about it. People—I mean, my board would never put up with that and they all know [I'm gay], and they're very supportive. That's what I like about [this district], because now we have an anti-discrimination clause in our hiring—in all the stuff we put out, which my board really wanted. The board president at the time said, "Byron, not that anything would ever happen to you, but you need to have this for yourself. Think about others like you. We need to protect people like you. Plus we want to be welcoming."

The support from the board and community gave Byron the security to focus on being a leader and making sound leadership decisions for the district.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have shared some of the stories that represent the experiences of the nine study participants. Their experiences reflect common themes that emerged from my research questions focusing on how LG administrators navigate different professional relationships and how those relationships affect their leadership. Jackson's (2007) research on LG teachers is supported here that being out in the workplace allows educators to focus on their leadership and job, rather than spend time and energy focusing on their job safety and security.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This in-depth, qualitative research study explored the experiences and stories of eight lesbian and gay education leaders. It addressed the following research questions:

- How do LG administrators perform in their relationships and roles as educational leaders?
    a) How do the policies and politics of a community influence the relationships and performances of LG administrators?
    b) How do sexuality, professional roles, and legal rights of protection influence the relationships and experiences of LG educational leaders?

The portraits of the eight participants are presented in Chapter 4, and specific stories that cross over several participants are detailed throughout both Chapters 4 and 5. Analysis of the data revealed several key themes expressed by the participants. Two themes are presented in Chapter 4: 1) the relationship between family and work for LG administrators; 2) the role and relationship of mentors in LG administrators' professional lives. Chapter 5 examines the remaining themes: 3) relationships with superiors; 4) relationships with teachers and staff; 5) the effects of isolation versus support in the professional environment. I approached the presentation of my own story and the stories of my participants as snapshots of my discussions with them, interwoven with my observations as a portraitist. As both a participant and portraitist, I followed Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's (1997) suggestion of "voice as preoccupation and voice as autobiography" and use "the intellectual and experiential structure [as my] point of reference [to] guide my angle of vision and … data collection" (p. 185-186). I found that including my voice and autobiographical reference allowed me to be a participant in the

interviews; my connection with some of their experiences was natural, and I learned a lot from the discussions with the participants.

This chapter will answer the research question and its sub-questions based on the data and discuss the implications of the results of the study. The chapter will also review the methods used in the study and make recommendations for further research. First, I review the research problem.

Research has shown that many lesbian and gay educational leaders are often hesitant to openly identify as LG (Blount, 2000; Harbeck, 1992; Jackson, 2007; Lugg, 2003), and the participants in this study are no different. In this study, the threat of losing a job, career, or even worse prevented every participant, at some time in her/his career, from being open about being lesbian or gay. The LG leaders in this study, at both the school and district level, have passed or covered aspects of themselves that do not fit stereotypical heterosexual norms. Moreover, the heteronormative culture in schools and school districts at times prevents leaders, including many in the study, from engaging in activities and developing relationships that will help make our schools safer and more productive for everyone, including other LG staff member or even LGBT students.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of LG administrators in school and district-level positions. The study focused on documenting their stories as LG educators, how they navigated their professional relationships, evolved as leaders, and the degree to which their choices to be out or not have influenced their careers and professional relationships. It also explored how LG leaders choose to perform in their various professional relationships. Finally, the leaders' stories provide insight into the

experiences of a marginalized group of professionals whose stories have been rarely documented in the professional and research literatures on school administration.

Throughout the study it was evident that an underlying fear looms over LG leaders, which is supported by the research of de Leon and Brunner (2012), Fraynd and Capper (2003), and Tooms (2007). This fear is a result of heteronormative traditions and policies that discriminate against LG leader and deny LG educators the same civil liberties and social and professional freedoms granted to heterosexual educators. Whether it is the unspoken practices and norms of a community, or the explicit laws that have provisions for equal protection for employment, job security and a sense of safety for LG leaders is often tentative. However, just as evident as the underlying fear, the participants' stories also reflect their commitment and the belief that LG leaders can change the culture of schools and the system so that every person, staff, and student, will be accepted and safe. This commitment to change hinges on the support structures that guide lesbians and gays throughout their childhood and careers. These support structures include strong family relationships, supportive mentors, and communities where anti-discrimination policies have been adopted to protect the rights of LG educators.

In the sections that follow, I will address the overarching research question and sub-questions and discuss findings that emerged from the study. I will also analyze how each of the five themes that I identified relates to each question. The chapter will end, like Chapter 1 begins, with a relevant personal story.

Conclusions: Research Questions

There are more similarities than differences in the experiences of the eight participants in the study. Though they all grew up in different parts of the country and

have very different lives, the people and relationships that intersected with these LG leaders throughout their careers share common traits, as do the participants themselves. Their experiences support much of the previously presented research on LG educators, while also offering some new insights.

How Do LG Administrators Perform in Their Relationships and Roles as Educational Leaders?

The performance choices of LG administrators in this study to cover, or pass, or be completely open about their sexuality is subjective and changes; it is often based on the person's feelings of security, safety, or conversely, sense of isolation, related to the culture of support from the organization, upper echelon leadership, and/or community. The participants' approach to a situation, an audience, or conflict can change based on variables that may include setting, professional role, age, gender, etc. I also found LG administrators perform differently depending on the person or group with whom they have the relationship, whether that be a staff member, a supervisor or a community member/group. The answers to this research question vary and are most dependent on the specific relationship and role requiring the performance. There were three key professional relationships that emerged from the interviews: LG administrator relationships with supervisors, with staff, and with parents/community.

The findings from the research regarding performance with supervisors were surprising because all of the participants who were still working in education reported that they were out to their current supervisors. Seven of the eight participants made the decision to reveal her/his sexuality at some point in her/his career. This seems to be directly related to the positive relationships the participants had with their supervisors.

The only participant who did not directly discuss her sexuality with her supervisor was Diane, who reported having a strained relationship with her supervisor, which ultimately led to her dismissal. The supervisor, a school board member, and assistant superintendent, assumed she was gay based on rumors. In sum, the majority of study participants were able to talk about their personal lives with their supervisors because those relationships were positive and supportive, and they didn't feel the need to cover or pass as heterosexual in their relationships with supervisors. Interestingly, the relationships were more positive because the participants were open and honest.

The result of this, as expressed by many participants, was a more trusting, open professional relationship and work culture. Only one participant, Megan, reported that the initial discussion about being gay with her supervisor was tense; however, the incident ultimately developed a deeper level of trust and respect between her and her principal. In Megan's case, discussing her sexuality actually improved the culture of the school because her principal became more sensitive to LG issues, including her own offensive language. This suggests that when there is a supportive relationship with a direct supervisor, LG administrators can have a significant impact on the social climate of a school for the staff and students by being out and honest about their sexuality. These findings align with research on LG teachers and their relationships with students and colleagues by Harbeck (1992), Jackson (2007), Jones-Redmond (2007), and Jennings (2005). The social change that many LG educators desire to bring about for their students at times begins with their own courage to bring about discussions of LG issues with their colleagues.

Even though most of the participants were out to their supervisor, they all talked about being were nervous or fearful about professional repercussions. Brian, who knew his supervisor was also gay, talked about his fear that district administrators might not back him up in a conflict because of their needs to pacify the community and conform to heteronormative values. Thankfully Brian was wrong; when a conflict arose that threatened Brian's job and reputation, his supervisors were completely supportive. However, the fear of every participant reiterates the findings of de Leon and Brunner (2012), Blount (2000), and Lugg (2003).

Though all but one participant felt supported by her/his supervisor, Patrick and April, who were both transitioning to new jobs at the time of the study, talked about how they were currently making choices to cover their sexuality until they built professional relationships with their supervisors. In every case, the participants talked about their fear and vulnerability when transitioning to a new position or new organization. This is consistent with how most people feel in new situations, but the stakes are higher for LG administrators because in these situations they may feel they have to make performance choices that often compromise their personal lives, beliefs, and relationships. This choice and the very need to practice heteronormative assimilation, though possibly temporary, is unique to the experiences of LG administrators, just as for lesbians and gays outside the field of education (Yoshino, 2001; Lugg, 2003). The key to a positive relationship with superiors seems to hinge on that even though a district or school has heteronormative biases in many of its systems and practices, when the leadership of the organization acts in ways against that heteronormativity, LG leaders have more positive, genuine and supportive relationships with their supervisors. Furthermore, the level of fear and sense of

security is much better, resulting in leadership practices that focus on what's best for the organization, school or children.

In their relationships with staff, every participant felt that their professional capital and previous professional experiences were the most significant driving force in their leadership performance. While none of the participants discussed that being lesbian or gay was a conscious part of their relationships with teachers, Brian did talk about making a conscious decision to not share as much of his personal life with his new staff. He reasoned that he got too close to some of the staff at his previous school and that closeness compromised his leadership at times. However, he also felt that this situation was not related to his sexuality. He reasoned that it created a conflict of interest and established unrealistic expectations for the teachers if he had to reprimand or take corrective action against someone. In this respect, the performance of leadership was tied to sexuality but was not an apparent or conscious aspect of the relationships the participants had with staff members.

Unlike relationships with staff, the awareness of heteronormative cultural biases were a major factor in the way the participants navigated relationships with parents and their communities. None of the participants reported having conversations about sexuality with a parent or member of the community. However, all but one participant, Maria, agreed that public knowledge of their sexuality posed a threat to their job security. This is consistent with the research of Macgillivray (2004) that found that "[m]any teachers and administrators fear backlash from morally conservative parents if they support or advocate and equity for GLBTIQ students" (p. 73). Though this research specifically examines the backlash for supporting students, a backlash from conservative

parents if the school or district leader is discovered to be gay is a reality. It is also consistent with the findings of the studies by Harbeck (1992), Jackson (2007), Jennings (2005), and Jones-Redmond (2007); participants feared losing their jobs if they were open about their sexuality. The heteronormative beliefs of a community require that LG leaders alter their actions and performance in many instances. These beliefs shackle leaders to discriminatory practices; they silence their voices or hide important parts of their lives that make them human. They will never be part of the community for their community does not know or accept them.

Relationships with community also seem to intersect with the level of leadership position and length of employment for a leader. April and Patrick's situations as new administrators in new district organizations suggest that LG leaders employ covering techniques until they become an accepted member of their communities or organizations. April felt she had to cover up her sexuality for fear that the community (the Baptist church) would remove their financial support of the school if they found out she was gay. Patrick employed covering techniques when talking to his new colleagues by avoiding gender specific pronouns in conversations. Like April and Patrick, Megan also covered her sexuality in her relationships with parents/community by quitting her coaching job for fear that if parents in her conservative community found out she was gay she would lose her job and/or be socially ostracized. At the time she was a new teacher with no professional capital in the community.

Mentorship. Research on leadership (Goleman et al. 2013; McCall, Lombardo & Morrison, 1988) suggest that mentors play a significant role in the development of effective leaders. Additional research on how mentorship specifically impacts leadership

(Kram, 1988; Roch, 1979; Stumpf & London, 1981; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Fagenson, 1989) suggests that the benefits of having a mentor improve overall effectiveness and sustained success for organizational leaders. The mentor relationship of the participants varied in formality but supported that having a mentor was important to leader effectiveness. Byron said about his mentor:

> She gave me this [job] opportunity. I wouldn't have had it if she didn't have confidence in me and trust me. As she got to know me and saw what I could do, she just let me go. I ran the district. I could do what I thought I needed to do. I have to give her credit for that. I don't know that I would've developed the way I did. I think I would've eventually, but I think it happened rapidly. Plus, I went to her early on because I was still very paranoid about being gay. When she hired me, I went to—after about a few months or something, I came into her office and I said, "You know, there's something I have tell you." I thought [telling her I was gay] was a big deal. She's like, "I knew that. What difference does that make?" Right after that, I had a leadership team meeting at my house, so 100 people from the district came over. I opened my life to everyone.

Byron's mentor, like the other participants who had a supportive mentor, promoted him, contributing to his successful and sustained career. The experiences of the research participants suggest that mentorship for LG leaders is most successful when that relationship includes the knowledge of the mentee's sexuality because the relationship is supportive in ways that alleviate possible fears and help them develop a sense of security.

This leads to the emergent theme of isolation and its effect on LG leaders. According to de Leon and Brunner (2012), a professional environment that promotes isolation found that LG leaders would retreat and adopt more heteronormative behaviors. Diane and Megan's stories supported this research. Diane retreated so much that she chose to retire; Megan retreated enough to quit her coaching job and talked about checking the mirror some mornings to see if she "looked too butch." While all the participants reported feelings of isolation at points in their careers, isolation from

superiors (Diane) and as a result of community mores (Megan) had the most detrimental effect on leadership and career choices. This suggests that organizations and environments that are supportive of LG rights and issues allow leaders to feel more connected and lead without having to adopt heteronormative behaviors.

a) How Do the Policies and Political Climate of a Community Influence the Relationships and Performances of LG Administrators?

Local anti-discrimination policies and legal protections, as well as the political climate that reflected support of gay rights issues, were a significant factor in many of the relationships the participants had with the three key stakeholder groups: supervisors, staff, and parents/community.

The participants' relationships with supervisors were often influenced by policy and politics in a way that was counter to the overall community politics. For example, though the official employment statutes in the state where Byron lives do not protect the rights of LG people, the school board in his district specifically drafted a district non-discrimination policy to protect him. Like Byron, Maria's school district changed its policy to protect employees from being dismissed for talking about their sexual orientation. I account for this because it is human beings who must enforce policy. While a policy on the books may be discriminatory, when it comes down to actually enforcing that policy, supervisors who have a direct relationship with a person tend to find fault in the policy. This action on the part of district or school leadership is what Macgillivray (2004) argues as a key step in actually changing policy or enforcing policy that supports LG issues in education.

Only one participant, Diane, experienced employment consequences when the district leadership actually targeted LG administrators. Diane's response to her termination was to retire and find another job in a neighboring district where she knew and trusted several of the leaders. This pre-established relationship offered her employment security because of her personal relationships. The result of this is that in many cases, it does not matter if the official policy or political climate of a community is unsupportive of LG civil rights, if the leaders of a district and school support the individual, she/he feels safer and more secure.

LG leaders and their relationships with staff did not show any significant effects as a result of LG supportive policy or politics of a community except to empower a few of the participants to feel safe coming out to their staff. Wayne, Byron, and Maria all felt comfortable being out to their staff. Only Wayne and Byron reported that their sexuality was never a formal topic of discussion with the staff, but Maria chose to share photos of her and her partner at her initial staff meeting each year. Maria's district in the Northwest has an anti-discrimination policy, an informal LG leader support group, and the community itself is very supportive of LG rights and issues. The policies of her district and the political climate of her community allowed Maria to feel safe sharing her sexuality and personal relationships with her staff in order to develop deeper relationships with them.

Finally, the policies and political climate of the community influenced the relationships that LG administrators had with the parents/community in ways that were most related to the participants' roles in the organizational hierarchy and the length of time the participant had worked in the organization. In general, the higher up the

administrative food chain the participant was, the safer she he felt about relationships with parents/community, and the more likely he/she was to be open about her/his sexual identity. Byron, a superintendent, had a gathering at his home with over 100 people from his district; he had been employed in the district for over 17 years and felt a connection with the community. The same was true for Patrick, who held a director position in his district and was employed there for over 10 years. The converse was also true; the lower the administrative position, the more vulnerable the parent/community relationships felt and the less likely she/he was to be open about sexual identity. Megan, a new assistant principal, illustrated this by shying away from building relationships with the community when she quit coaching. Diane, employed for only a few years as a principal in a very conservative community, focused her energy on building relationships with people at school and avoided many community connections. Furthermore, though April was one of only four principals in her district and knew her superintendent well, because she was new and just starting to build relationships with parents/community, she chose to hide her sexuality, something she had never done before. The policies and political climate of a community had increasing influence on the participants' parent/community relationships when they were new to the position or positions lower in the organizational hierarchy.

b) How Do Sexuality, Gender, and Legal Rights of Protection Influence the Relationships and Experiences of LG Educational Leaders?

I expected to find that most of the participants would not be out at work, especially those that live in the Southwest. I also expected to find that more men would hide their sexuality than women. I was wrong in both these expectations. All of the four male participants were out at work, to their supervisors and with their staff (to varying

degrees). However, only three of the four female participants were out at work, to their supervisors and staff. This is related to gender because it is a reflection of employment security that men have over women in general. As discussed in Chapter 2, men have traditionally filled the positions of school and district leadership. Men were, and continue to be viewed as leaders more often than women. There is a security of position and power that men hold, which may account for why all the male participants were out at work.

Sexuality and professional title/organizational hierarchy. The findings suggest a relationship between sexuality and organizational hierarchy suggests that the higher the professional title and place in the organizational hierarchy, the more likely the participant is to have strong, positive relationships with the key stakeholder groups. For example, Byron, the superintendent, had very positive relationships with the school board, his entire staff of administrators, and the parents/community members, though he reported that this was not the case when he was a principal. At that point in his career, his relationship with parents/community members was very tentative, and he often worried that his sexuality could become a factor in his continued employment. This was reiterated by April, Wayne, Brian, and Diane, who all held principal positions and reported positive relationships with staff and supervisors, but their relationships with the community felt tentative because they felt a lack of support for LG rights issues. Maria was the only principal whose story was not consistent with this trend, but her community was also the most progressively supportive of LG issues and her district had an anti-discrimination policy. While age may be a confounding factor in this, none of the participants discussed their age as a consideration in these relationships.

The opposite example is Megan. She was the rookie assistant principal at her school and low in the administrative hierarchy. Megan's relationships with her supervisor had improved but she did not feel her principal would support her if issues related to her sexuality arose. Megan's relationships with the staff were professional but distant; she did not feel comfortable sharing her personal life with them, but at the same time did not have any fear about them finding out she was gay. Finally, Megan's relationship with parents/community was tentative, at best. She expressed fear about being outed to the parents/community. She felt vulnerable in this relationship and worked to keep her interactions with parents at a minimum.

Overall, LG leaders with higher positions of authority had consistently more positive relationships with all stakeholder groups with whom they work. This is significant because research on LG educational leaders has yet to examine how placement in the organizational hierarchy affects relationships, feelings of efficacy, fear, and safety.

Sexuality and legal/formal policy rights of protection. My findings suggest that sexuality and legal rights of protection intersect to affect LG administrators' relationships with key stakeholder groups in a significant way. LG administrators who have legal or formal policy rights of protection in the workplace seem more likely to have positive relationships with supervisors, staff, and parents/community. It stands to reason that people, whether lesbian, gay, or heterosexual, who have legal/formal policy rights of protection for employment and non-discrimination will have more positive relationships at work because they are more secure and feel more valued at work and in the community (Jackson, 2007; Harbeck, 1992; Jennings, 2005). While this is not meant to argue that by

simply having legal/formal rights of protection guarantees that LG administrators will have positive relationships with stakeholder groups, it seems to be evident from this study that if laws and policies communicate a system of values and beliefs that support, protect, and acknowledge LG rights, the workplace relationships that develop as a result of those values and culture will be positive, professional, and inclusive. Moreover, those relationships will be better for everyone.

Implications

The number of lesbians and gays who serve as educational leaders is unknown. Schools are microcosms of society, made up of hierarchies, social groups, economies, and norms. Because educational organizations are often a reflection of the surrounding community and its make-up, our expectation is that the values, policies and practices of the organization represent the best of what we have to offer for justice, equality, opportunity, and acceptance. Educational leaders must embody these values, but to do that they must all have the same rights, protections, and privileges.

District leaders, school boards, and school leaders must develop policies and practices that foster a culture of support for LG administrators. Such policies and practices will help all the leaders in the organization to develop better, stronger, and more collaborative relationships. As leaders throughout educational organizations, policy and practice must communicate the values of non-discrimination and support so that LG leaders and teachers feel safe, less distracted, and better able to focus on students. Organizations with policies and practices that protect and support LG administrators can influence their surrounding communities that lack such policies and laws.

In regard to being out, at the end of my interview sessions with each participant, I asked if he/she thought we, lesbian women and gay men, should be out at school. Everyone answered yes and reasoned that by coming out we can serve as models to our LGBT students and help them feel safe and supported at school. Ultimately this is a personal choice, but given that the most productive relationships I documented in the research were based on honesty and mutual respect that allowed LG administrators to be open about their lives, at the very least, being out should be a choice based in personal preference, not safety or fear.

Educational systems must begin to educate all their employees about tolerance, acceptance, and equality for everyone. These systems and their leaders must examine the heteronormative practices and policies that work to limit, oppress and victimize the LG members of the system, including LG educational leaders. The conversations that may develop from this examination and subsequent discussion will filter to the broader community and to the students, resulting in changes in policy and political climates that are more inclusive and equitable for everyone.

Recommendations

Having learned more about the relationships and performance techniques of LG administrators, and having found little research related to LG administrators, I recommend the following as potential research ideas:

1. An examination of educational systems as they implement policy changes that support and protect LGBT educators for employment and non-discrimination.
2. A study that examines the effects that LGBT supportive policy has on the culture of a school or school district.

3. A study that examines the perceptions of LGBT administrators as told from the opposite side of this study's lens. How do supervisors, staff, and parents/community relate to, know, and navigate relationships with LGBT administrators.

The Next Part of the Story

I was driving to school early one morning in March and my cell phone rang. It was Sean Kochman, the assistant principal who made the gay joke so many years ago. He had left the district for a principal job in a neighboring community at the end of my 14th year of teaching. His new district had a high school in need of an assistant principal to oversee curriculum and testing, and he wanted me to come in for an interview. Of course I was flattered that he thought I would be right for the job, but after I agreed and hung up, I thought about how a new job meant new people, new relationships, and new awkward conversations that challenged my safety and security as an educator. I had been at my school for nine years, and I no longer had to lie by omission about my wife; my colleagues finally had the courtesy to just not ask. I also asked myself if I really want to work with Sean again? He seemed to be very happy. Was that a reflection that the other administrators in his new district were like-minded? Was that community even more conservative than the one I was currently in? Would they tell gay jokes? Would I choose to laugh again?

I went for the interview, and I got the job. As I drove home, I called Sean to say thank you. He was excited for me to finally move into administration, but he was also excited to have me "in the club." As we were about to hang up the phone, Sean asked about Sloan, my wife. I gulped. We had never talked about her; I had never talked to any

administrator about my personal life. How did he know? Would he tell my new boss? Would he use this against me? Should I answer him directly or act like I didn't know what he was talking about? So, I jumped.

I told him she was doing well and enjoying the warm spring weather. He congratulated me again, and we hung up. Ironically, Sloan and I ran into Sean a few nights later at a restaurant. He greeted her with a smile and hug; she had no idea this was the guy who made gay jokes years ago. He told her how excited he was to have me coming to his district.

I learned from that situation that people are more than what they present at times; they change, grow, and evolve. Sean was not the homophobic bigot I thought he was years ago; Sean's "joke" in his office on that day was the most likely a performance of a new assistant principal trying to build a connection with a teacher, but he went about it all wrong. His joke may not have been an accurate reflection of his belief system any more than my acts of covering had been throughout the years. Sean and I are colleagues and friends now. He has moved up a few more ranks and keeps dropping hints that he would like me to apply for a district office job and work directly with him. I feel safer working with him because I am open and honest with him. He is a positive mentor for me. I do not think about taking a new position with the trepidation; I no longer lie about my marriage and my personal life. I have grown and evolved, and my professional relationships are better for it.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

January ___, 2013

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Jeanne Powers and Professor Gustavo Fischman in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual school administrators. I am inviting your participation, which will involve a series three to five 60-90 minute interviews plus one on-site observation of a meeting where you are the facilitator.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 years or older and have a minimum of two years of administrator experience to participate.

While there is no direct benefit to you, the larger application and benefit this study aims to achieve is to better understand the experiences of LGB administrators in Arizona. It aims to give voice to a group of professionals who have gone unheard or silenced. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation, as every measure will be taken to protect the identity of every participant.

Confidentiality will be maintained through confidentiality agreements; you interviews will be kept confidential and any significant detail that could be linked back to you or your place of employment will be changed. Your name and the names of any individuals or organizations you discuss in the interviews will be replaced with pseudonyms. Other measures of confidentiality will be discussed upon your agreement to participate in the study. While the results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, your name will not be used.

If you are willing to be a participant in this study, please contact Shannon Anderson at (503) 381-4697 or shananderson@cox.net. Additionally, if you know of someone else who may be interested in participating in the study, I have included an additional letter for you to forward to her/him.

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Sincerely,
Shannon Anderson

APPENDIX B

FORWARD LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

January 15, 2013
Dear potential study participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Jeanne Powers and Professor Gustavo Fischman in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual school administrators. You are receiving this letter from another participant who thought you would be interested in participating in the study. Your participation in the study will involve a series three to five 60-90 minute interviews and one on-site observation of a meeting where you are the facilitator.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 years or older and have a minimum of two years of administrator experience to participate.

While there is no direct benefit to you, the larger application and benefit this study aims to achieve is to better understand the experiences of LGB administrators in Arizona. It aims to give voice to a group of professionals who have gone unheard or silenced. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation, as every measure will be taken to protect the identity of every participant.

Confidentiality will be maintained through confidentiality agreements; you interviews will be kept confidential and any significant detail that could be linked back to you or your place of employment will be changed. Your name and the names of any individuals or organizations you discuss in the interviews will be replaced with pseudonyms. Other measures of confidentiality will be discussed upon your agreement to participate in the study. While the results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, your name will not used.

If you are willing to be a participant in this study, please contact Shannon Anderson at (503) 381-4697 or shananderson@cox.net.

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Sincerely,

Shannon Anderson

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM
Navigating The Heteronormative Public Education System:
Lesbian and Gay Educators' Experiences in Educational Leadership

INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHERS
Shannon Anderson, a Doctoral Candidate in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University has invited your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of the research is to explore the professional experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual administrators and how those experiences have affected their leadership.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of LGB administrators in schools and districts across the Phoenix metropolitan area and their experiences as LGB leaders. Participants will be interviewed about their path to leadership, experiences as LGB leaders and reflections on the many elements that have affected them as LGB leaders. Participants can skip questions during any interview.

If you say YES, then your participation will last for a series of three 60-90 minute interviews, to be held at a location of your choosing. You will be asked to answer questions relating to your professional experiences as a lesbian, gay or bisexual educator, your experiences related to "coming out" or choosing not to "come out" at work, and how different elements of your professional life as a lesbian, gay or bisexual administrator have affected your leadership. Approximately 9-12 subjects will be participating in this study; all of them are currently employed as administrators and have at least 2 years of administration experience.

RISKS
There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS
Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the possible benefits of your participation in the research are that in understanding the experiences of our educational leaders who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, we can continue to change the culture of schools and districts to be more tolerant and safe for LGB people: staff and students alike.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Shannon Anderson will sign a confidentiality agreement will each study participant.

- Interview locations will be determined by each participant to maintain confidentiality and privacy.
- All audio recordings and interview notes will be kept in a digital password protected dropbox account until the completion of the study. Once the study and analysis are completed, the recordings and notes will be deleted from the account.
- Participants will review interview transcripts before pseudonyms are selected. Once reviewed, the names and other identifying elements will be changed. Original transcripts will be deleted from the dropbox at the conclusion of the study analysis and presentation.
- Only the researcher and her direct ASU sponsors will have access to the consent forms, and those forms will be housed at ASU in a secure location according to university requirements.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all recordings and notes will be destroyed within 10 days of notifying the researcher of your decision. Any data collected will no be used in the final analysis of the study.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by Shannon Anderson, 3898 S Bridal Vail Dr., Gilbert, AZ 85297; (503) 381-4697.

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your

consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Subject's Signature	Printed Name	Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator_____
Date_____

APPENDIX D

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT
Navigating The Heteronormative Public Education System:
Lesbian and Gay Educators' Experiences in Educational Leadership

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

As a researcher working on the above research study at Arizona State University, I understand that I must maintain the confidentiality of all information concerning research participants. This information includes, but is not limited to, all identifying information and research data of participants and all information accruing from any direct or indirect contact I may have with said participants. In order to maintain confidentiality, I hereby agree to refrain from discussing or disclosing any information regarding research participants, including information described without identifying information, to any individual who is not part of the above research study or in need of the information for the expressed purposes on the research program.

_____	_____	_____
Signature of Researcher	Printed Name	Date

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

To:	Jeanne Powers ED
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	03/26/2013
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	03/26/2013
IRB Protocol #:	1303008922
Study Title:	The Principal's Closet: The performance and relationship navigation strategies of lesbian, g administrators

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.